

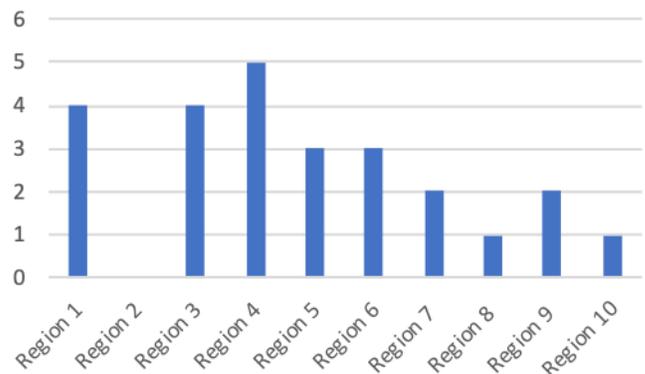
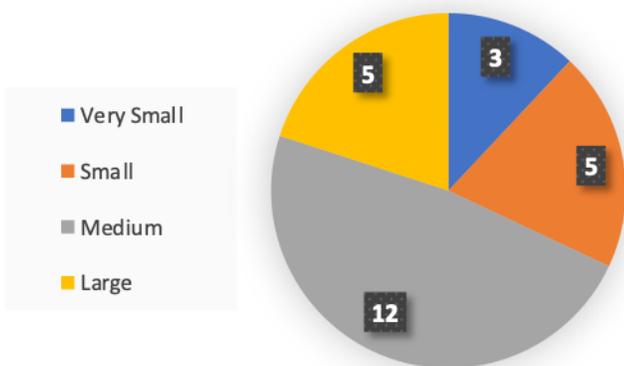


COVID-19 and State Drinking Water Program Challenges

The COVID-19 pandemic presented multiple preparedness and response challenges to the water sector. In order to develop an understanding of the potential impacts to state and territorial drinking water programs, ASDWA developed a survey to assess the impacts of COVID-19 on states and territories, how their implementation processes may be changing, and how ASDWA might use the survey information in its ongoing dialogue with EPA. The survey was sent to ASDWA members on March 30th and the survey questions were organized in the following categories:

- Business Designation,
- Compliance Monitoring,
- Lab Capacity,
- Operators,
- Inspections.

ASDWA received responses from 25 states representing almost all EPA regions. The survey results provide a representative national sample, from both a state size (pie chart) and geographical distribution (bar chart) perspective as show below:



Business Designation

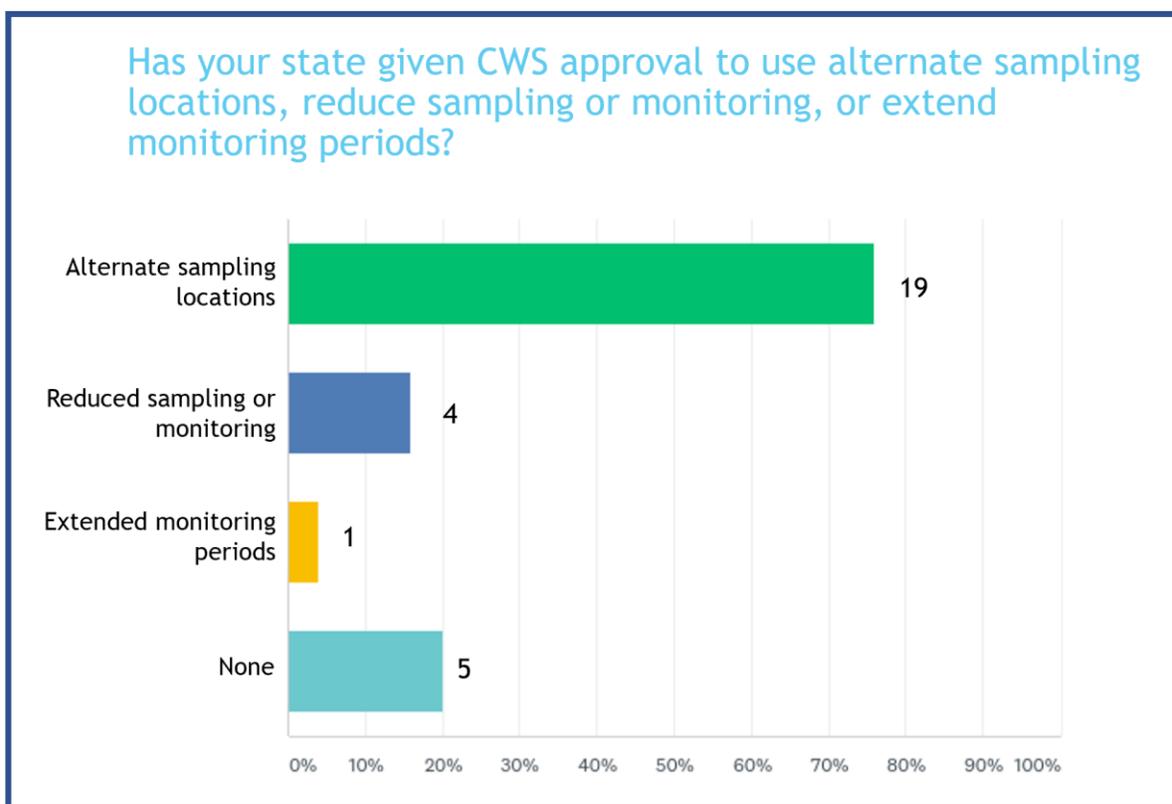
The survey requested information on state approaches to business designation and business closures to better understand how the pandemic may be influencing businesses that are involved in maintaining quality drinking water. While almost all respondents indicated that their state is experiencing business closures, the vast majority of respondents also answered that their state

has deemed the following businesses essential or life-sustaining: commercial labs, chemical equipment suppliers, engineering staff designated to assist issuing emergency permits or conduct emergency design work, construction crews that can make emergency repairs, operators, all state safe drinking water program staff, state labs, and essential workers listed in the [CISA Guidance on Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers](#).

Compliance Monitoring

The survey requested information on state approaches for addressing compliance monitoring through alternate sampling locations and reduced or extended sampling, by checking one or more of the options shown in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: Compliance Monitoring



Most state respondents indicated that they are allowing for alternate sampling locations and a smaller portion replied that they are not currently using any of the above options. Most state participants also noted in the survey that they have provided some information or guidance to systems regarding compliance issues related to COVID-19.

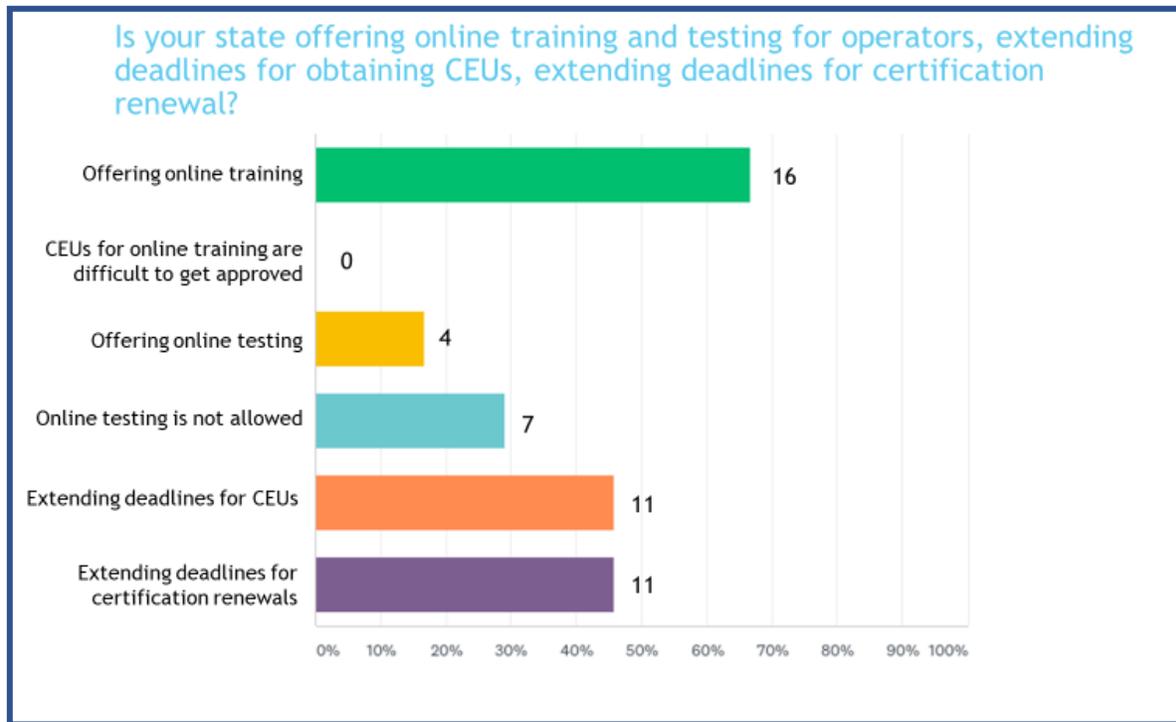
Laboratory Capacity

The survey results showed that of the 25 respondents, 20 states confirmed that they are not currently experiencing laboratory capacity issues. Over 90% of states surveyed also shared that they have a lab accreditation database. More information on these state databases can be found [here](#).

Operators

States were asked to provide information on how they plan to share operators and manage operator certification during the pandemic. One of the survey questions requested that states check the boxes on whether or not they are offering online training and testing for operators and if they are extending deadlines for CEUs and certification renewal, with the results shown in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2: Operator Training, Testing, and Certification



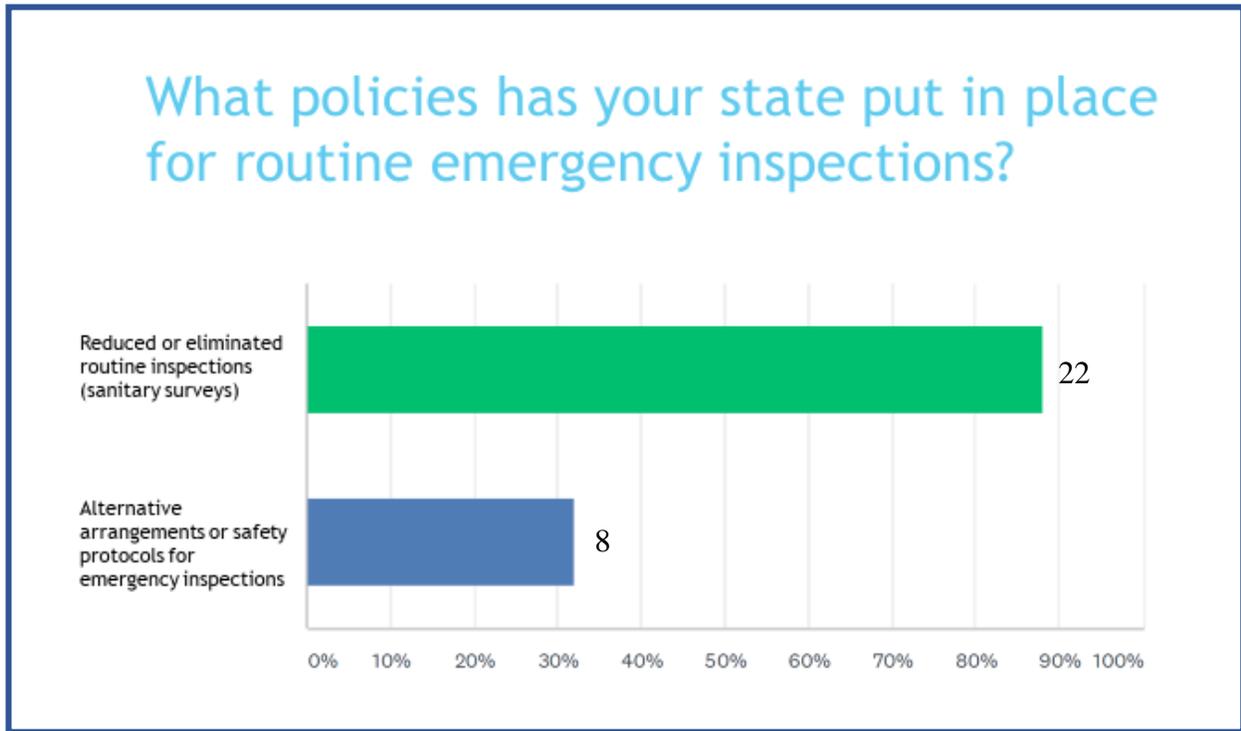
Additionally, states were asked if they have a plan or system in place to share operators if an operator becomes ill. Of the 25 respondents, 22 states confirmed that they currently have a process or plan to share operators, with many responses referencing the state [Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network \(WARN\)](#) or coordination with the state Rural Water Association.

Inspections

This survey also included a question regarding state inspection processes, specifically what policies states have put in place for routine emergency inspections; the results are shown in **Figure 3**. Common themes in the comment option for this question included:

- States were in the process of developing inspection procedures,
- States will conduct inspections in the case of a public health threat or emergency,
- States are conducting or developing procedures for virtual/remote inspections.

Figure 3: Emergency Inspections



Conclusions

ASDWA continues to monitor developments related to the COVID-19 outbreak. Each drinking water program’s approach to addressing COVID-19 will be state specific. While this survey is not exhaustive in all state COVID-19 activities, it does capture the initial reaction of state drinking water programs to the pandemic on key program issues. To access the survey results, [click here](#). For more resources and information on COVID-19, please visit the [ASDWA COVID-19 webpage](#).