

September 29, 2020

Ohio Prisons Using Wastewater Monitoring to Help Combat COVID-19

Director Chambers-Smith issued Executive Order 20-03 which requires routine staff COVID-19 testing for all state employees, contractors, and volunteers. The frequency of testing at each DRC worksite will be determined through interpretation of staff, inmate and wastewater COVID-19 test results.

DRC, in partnership with The Ohio State University and their environment health experts, recently began monitoring wastewater from facilities across the state for the presence of COVID-19. This has provided early warning indicators about potential problem areas or hot spots, allowing for operational changes and modifications to be made based on the results. As part of the ongoing effort to protect the health and safety of the staff, DRC is implementing the required staff testing protocols as outlined in Executive Order 20-03.

Also, in consultation with an environmental health expert from The Ohio State University, DRC examined how air circulation systems could be used to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Over 10,000 air filters were replaced with the highest rated air filter that each HVAC system could accept, and new, upgraded ionization filtration systems were installed at five locations. In addition, DRC is implementing new innovations - such portable ionizing air purification and disinfecting systems for use within our prisons.

DRC COVID-19 testing data is posted each day at coronavirus.ohio.gov