1: Has waste management been classed as an essential service in your country?

Yes, municipal waste management has been classified as an essential service in Sweden as part of municipal technical support (such as above waste energy and water for example).

2: How many workers are affected by the current situation / are you operating with a reduced workforce?

As we are the Waste Management Association, we do not have any such figures. We provide general advice to the municipalities (and now also on the Corona virus/Covid-19 in relation to the collection of municipal waste and linked questions). Please find here a document (in Swedish) with information in relation to Corona from Avfall Sverige for our members.

a: What special measures have you taken to enable operations to continue with a reduced workforce?

Avfall Sverige has forwarded information from the national authority in charge of those questions (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, https://www.msb.se/en/). The general advice is to plan for continuously operating of the public responsibility to collect municipal waste, also under conditions with less employees. Part of this general advice is to co-operate with neighbouring municipalities and the regional authority. Next step is that the regional authority requests support from the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency.

b: What extra health and safety precautions have you taken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of your waste workforce?

We have consulted the Public Health Agency of Sweden. At the moment there is no specific advice on special safety measures when handling municipal waste from households. There are special precautions for waste from hospitals containing Corona from the authority Swedish Health Care, the Public Health Agency of Sweden and Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency when it comes to classification, handling and transportation of Corona infected waste.

c: Have you / will you, scale back your waste collection frequency?

Again, Avfall Sverige does not give any such specific advice to our members part from the general advice given (see above 2.a).

3: How is your system coping with the increase in face masks and other PPE in household waste?

Again, at the moment there is no specific advice on special safety measures when handling municipal waste from households part from health care at home under the supervision of public health care (which is not the case for Corona so far).
a: Do face masks continue to go into residual waste, or have you introduced any special measures for the separate collection of face masks?

See above. There are special precautions for waste from hospitals containing Corona from the authority Swedish Health Care, the Public Health Agency of Sweden and Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency when it comes to classification, handling and transportation of Corona infected waste.

b: Have you made any special communications to the general public, for example, do you ask them to make fewer trips to the recycling stations, or to avoid trips to the tips/drop-off centres to get rid of bulky waste items?

Avfall Sverige has given general advice to our members municipalities and municipal companies to consider advice on limited amounts of visits to bulky waste stations. Both for the protection of employees and for not having too much waste to handle at the same time (followed by the situation when many people work from home and taking the opportunity to clean up).

c: Are people being given special instructions on how to deal with possibly contaminated waste?

Again, we follow general advice from the authorities, that we transfer continuously to our member.

4: Do recycling centres remain open to the general public?

Yes, they are still open. This is also linked to that there is no look down of the Swedish society so far. Restrictions apply to visiting residential homes and gathering in large numbers.

5: Have the international travel restrictions caused any interruptions with sending waste for processing overseas, importing/exporting waste? How are you managing the waste you cannot ship overseas?

Some of our members are noticing decreases in imported waste amounts, because import brokers have trouble delivering as promised. We have indications that RDF amounts from the UK is decreasing because sorting plants are shutting down. There are also some interruptions and disturbances in traffic concerning waste from Germany and Norway. Some of our energy recovery members see this as a minor problem, while others who are more reliant on imported waste are seriously worried.

6: Are you incinerating (if capacity exists) more MSW than previously?

No. MSW amounts seem to be stable. Import waste and C&I waste seem to be decreasing. The latter is probably due to covid-19 preventive measures and beginning economic contraction. The effects do not seem to be that dramatic (yet).

We normally have surplus capacity in Sweden, and this hasn't changed. It’s probable that we will have more spare capacity because of the current health crisis.