
From the Chair: Priorities in 2014

By David Lathrop • Section
Chair • Nebraska DHHS

All organizations must take time to reflect on where they have been where they are now and how they are going to meet the opportunities and challenges that are coming. Water is in the news. As an all volunteer section, meeting those challenges poses an exceptional personal commitment. The rewards for that commitment are manifold ranging from the satisfaction of helping others to the personal connection to colleagues to professional growth through leadership. There are plenty of opportunities to serve either as an officer or as a committee chair or member. Please join us in making a difference.

In order to sustain and energize our section, as chair I have proposed three initiatives for the 2014 year of service. The first initiative is to align our section strategic goals and deliverables with national AWWA's new strategic goals. The second initiative is to establish a template bank of SOPs (standard operating procedures) policy statements and guideline documents for water/wastewater utilities. The third initiative is to benchmark key performance indicators with similarly-sized utilities across Nebraska.

The third initiative is the most ambitious in terms of scope. The third goal begins by identifying key performance indicators and recruiting participants to establish a baseline for comparisons. I envision three levels of involvement depending on the data collection and reporting abilities of each utility. Ideally, the benchmarking will continue an annual basis and may bootstrap the entire population of water and wastewater utilities in Nebraska to

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awwaneb.org/words

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higher levels of service and accountability if wide participation is obtained.

A key objective from benchmarking your utility with others is to encourage best practices. Many of the most important best practices for any utility center around asset-management program activities. A comprehensive asset-management program prioritizes expenditures for projects and equipment based on their risk, life expectancy, and current condition. A good asset-management program takes the politics out of money decisions. Moreover, asset

management programs show what levels of expenditure a utility needs to make in order to sustain operations. If you're not sustaining your system, then your utility is creating a backlog of needs that your grandchildren will have to pay in order to catch up. In addition to the many other benefits, asset management aids in minimizing operating costs and often prevents costly emergency repairs.

The Nebraska Section AWWA is here to serve. Please visit the website and give us your suggestions.

Thanks for all that you do.

Director's Report: Water - It Defines Us!

By John Olsson • Section Director • Olsson Associates

From a legislative standpoint, 2014 was a big year relative to the advancement of water. Under the leadership of Sen. Tom Carlson, LB 1098 and a couple of companion bills were introduced and ultimately promulgated into law on April 17th. The main bill creates a water sustainability fund with not only an initial investment, but also with annual cash infusions in the years ahead. The bill also restructures the state's Natural Resources Commission to create greater emphasis on sustainability.

This new structure will evaluate projects and fund those that best meet the needs of future generations across a range of priorities. Priorities include reducing aquifer depletion, increasing stream flow, managing flood threats, protecting wildlife, promoting conservation, and ensuring that municipal and industrial needs can be met. On the day of the signing, Governor Heineman told reporters, "This is a difficult and

challenging issue and this legislation is aimed at planning for better future water use in our state."

In the same way, the American Water Works Association is taking a holistic approach with the Total Water Solutions initiative. It is recognized that water is not easily divided into different use categories, and water professionals increasingly must understand and manage water in all its stages. As a Section, it is becoming increasingly important for us to be a diverse group that has a deep understanding of drinking water, but also a general understanding of all things water. In the coming months and years, it will be important for the Nebraska Section to take stock in how we are represented within our structure and what we can do to be leaders.

Let's face it: Water is a crown jewel no matter where you live in the world, and

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Nebraska happens to be sitting right on top of some of the best water around -- just ask the good folks of Curtis...voted best water in the world at the National Rural Water Association "Great American

Water Taste Test" in February. The opportunities are great for us, so we need to adapt and be thinking about how we can better serve our members and the citizens of Nebraska.

A Word from the Editor

By Brian Gongol • Publications Editor • DJ Gongol & Associates

Things are starting to heat up for the mid-term Congressional and Senate elections, and the speculation about who will run for the White House in 2016 is certainly white-hot. On a more local basis, Nebraska voters will choose all kinds of officials in November, ranging from the governor on down the line through other state executives, state senators, regents, commissioners, and NRD directors, not to mention the many local and county officials who will stand for election as well.

Regardless of your affiliation -- Republican, Democratic, or neither of the above -- we can probably all agree that there is a shortage of one kind of politician, and that's the technician.

Take a look at Congress, where the latest report says that a majority of Senators are lawyers (and nearly a majority are career politicians), and that most Representatives are lawyers, career politicians, former teachers or professors, or businesspeople. In all of Congress, there are but six engineers -- who are outnumbered by both accountants and social workers. Based on the figures, there don't appear to be any water-treatment operators within shouting distance of Capitol Hill.

With efforts like the AWWA Washington Fly-In and our outreach to state and

Federal legislators, we as an industry certainly try to make our voices heard. But the fact remains that we are almost totally absent from the ranks of lawmakers. And the same goes for many other technical fields -- there are a couple of pilots and former software-company executives in the House of Representatives, but when it comes to finding people who know about how to make real things work, the examples are few and far between.

It's been said that "If you always do what you always did, you'll always get what you always got" (sidenote: I'd love to attribute the quote, but nobody seems to agree on the original). Thus it should not come as a surprise if we find that public works take a very low priority in the public debate if we keep sending people into office who don't have any first-hand knowledge of what our work involves. While I wouldn't dare argue that people with a technical background have any special claim to Truth, Justice, and the American Way, it's perfectly fair to note that working in a technical field like the public-works sector trains individuals to have a certain problem-solving mentality. And if there's one place many Americans agree that problem-solving skills are in demand, it's in the hallowed halls of our lawmaking bodies.

We already face a pretty significant

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worker shortage in this industry, so I don't expect anyone currently in the business to drop everything and start campaigning. But maybe there's room out there for a few retired water-sector professionals to take up a second career in politics. Food for thought, perhaps?

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This is our first official edition following a "digital-first" approach to publication. We are trying to adapt to a more timely manner of delivering you the news of the Nebraska Section while still keeping up our 51-year-old tradition of a printed publication. The content is the same, but we are trying to do more to give you an appropriately 21st-Century periodical, and that means we have to think about

pixels as well as print. We hope you like it, and your feedback (positive or otherwise) is welcome (brian@gongol.net).

This first edition of 2014 includes an important invitation to recognize your fellow professionals for their efforts to work safely, great news about our membership efforts, and important news about regulations affecting our industry. Kearney's Kirk Stocker was kind enough to offer some thoughts on water conservation, and Mike Wentink wants you to think about operator knowledge as an asset. As always, we invite our section chair and director to share their thoughts as well. Please dig deeply through this edition and consider sharing your own thoughts in the next edition.

Committee Reports

AWARDS

From Dennis Watts: The awards committee is asking you to take some time out of your day and consider nominating persons that are eligible for awards, whether it be state or national. The awards committee feels that there are a lot of very deserving individuals in the water industry that should be recognized. Please visit the awards committee page. This site has the new awards on it and also the WISA. Please give this some thought; a list of the awards is on the Nebraska Section AWWA website and also the national website. Thank you for your time in looking recognizing deserving water industry personnel.

EDUCATION

If you need new ways to earn credit hours, the AWWA offers "eLearning"

courses through the national website.

MEMBERSHIP

From Marc Rosso: In January I attended the membership summit in Denver and learned exciting new things about AWWA and how to drive membership. Over 30 membership chairs and AWWA staff were in attendance including the membership chair from Mexico who saw snow for the first time. On Wednesday the session was designed for 1st time attendees and we learned of benefits of being an AWWA member. Thursday sessions included a keynote by address Sheri Jacobs, President of Avenue M Group, who discussed that we need to focus on what problems our members have, what programs we have that solve those problems and sell those benefits. The Art of Membership, How to Attract, Retain and Cement Member Loyalty was her discussion. It was very insightful and we

Committee Reports/continued

will be talking about how to implement some of her strategies for the NEAWWA. Three breakout sessions included Building an Action-Oriented Committee, Communicating the Value of Your Utility Membership and Recruiting New Members. On both Wednesday and Thursday evening activities included networking events so we learned more about what our fellow Sections were doing in their parts of the country. Friday's sessions included the upcoming roll out of the new membership information which will be in graphical form and anticipated in the 2nd quarter of the year. This data will be very valuable as we attempt to grow our membership. Which, by the way, Nebraska is currently #1 in both retention (94.1%) and growth by percentage (5.7%) of all 43 Sections. We completed our 2014 membership plan and submitted to AWWA well ahead of the March 31 deadline. We are entered in the membership challenge which could pay \$200 to the section if we meet goals.

We currently have 327 active members, 21 late and 348 total members. Our 2014 year end section goal is 339 so we are ok so far. Several expired members are utilities that are active and long-time members so we will be checking with them to see if they received their renewals.

Since the last Board meeting we have organized discussed how to approach the engineers that stamp water plans for HHS approval in addition to Fall Conference attendees that are not AWWA members. Upcoming activities include updating the SOP with activities that seem to work well and addition of new ideas for late 2014.

The Membership Committee is pleased to

welcome our newest member, Cathy Meyer who works for the Nebraska City Utilities. We would also like to encourage our existing members to renew your membership so you can continue to receive the benefits of membership that include expanding your knowledge, improving your network and empowering your career. Membership in AWWA provides you with information like OpFlow and The Journal where you can learn about new technologies and what others are doing in the industry. It also provides a network of professionals that can help with questions you may have or solving water system problems. So, if you want to learn about operational, maintenance, troubleshooting or new technologies in your field, grow your professional knowledge, gain access to current events, or just have some fun while meeting new people, membership in AWWA is a continued step in the right direction!

The Nebraska Section is pleased to have the following new members since 11/1/13. Please welcome them if you see them!

Warren Humphey, Olsson Associates
Devin Schultze, Student
Jade Lammars, Burgess Well Company, Minden
Mike Parde, City of Fremont
Cathy Meyer, Nebraska City Utilities

PUBLIC INFORMATION

From Mary Poe: Drinking Water Week is May 4th through 10th. Mayors' proclamations, press releases, and Facebook posts are planned during the week. Speaking of Facebook, the Nebraska Section Facebook page has 152 fans. Watch for informational posts during Drinking Water Week. Anyone can

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access the Facebook page: You do not need an account and do not need to log in to view the page.

PUBLICATIONS

From Brian Gongol: Thank you to all of the contributors who submitted material for the spring edition of Wise Water Words. We're moving to what is called a "digital-first" strategy. As contributions come in, we'll publish them online at awwaneb.org/words (more or less immediately upon receipt). Then, per our traditional publications schedule, we will "close the books" three times per year and produce our print publication with whatever has arrived since the prior print publication. This serves both types of reader -- if you want to get the news as it's available, you'll find it online. If you just want a summary a few times per year, we'll have that available, too. This "digital-first" approach means we're always publishing the digital edition, and following up with a printed publication to summarize what's already online. We'll also let you know via our mass-mailing list when each edition is complete so you can view it immediately online. In the long term, we hope to get most of our readers comfortable with the digital edition, which could allow us to dramatically cut publishing and mailing costs in the future, saving the Nebraska Section considerable money.

If you did not pick up your printed copy of the section directory at the Fall Conference in Kearney, please send me an e-mail (brian@gongol.net) and we'll send you a copy.

SAFETY

From Doug Woodbeck: As all NSAWWA members should be aware, every year the Section solicits award nominations from the membership for the myriad of

awards that are available to members and non-members alike. One of these often overlooked awards is the Safety award.

Having worked with many public water systems and other water industry related companies, I know that safety is a major consideration for most, especially the safety of employees and the public. Safeguarding equipment and material, while very important, takes a back seat in preference of protecting human life and well-being.

With this said, the Nebraska Section is requesting that all members systems and individuals take the time to submit an application for your system/business to receive a safety award this year. Safety Award nomination forms must be submitted no later than July 25, 2014 to Milo Rust from the City of Chadron (the Section's Safety Committee Chair).

Milo Rust
c/o City of Chadron
PO Box 390
Chadron, NE 69337

Safety Award nomination forms may be downloaded from the Section website, or they may be obtained by e-mail request from Milo Rust (publicworks@chadron-nebraska.com), Tony Martinez (tony.martinez@nebraska.gov), or Doug Woodbeck (doug.woodbeck@nebraska.gov). The Section would like to receive as many Safety award nomination forms as possible, because we know there are many deserving public water systems and other member companies out there with very good safety programs and safety records.

We look forward to seeing you, and presenting an award to your organization at the Fall Conference in Kearney in November.

Committee Reports/continued

WATER FOR PEOPLE

From Christian New: Don't miss golfing at Nebraska's only 5-star golf course! Register now for the 2014 Water for People Golf Scramble to be held on May 9, 2014. 1:30 SHOTGUN START, dinner follows.

Location: Woodland Hills Golf Course, 6000 Woodland Hills Drive, Eagle, Nebraska

We need hole prizes and raffle prizes; consider sponsoring a hole or entertaining your clients with a wonderful springtime day and dinner! Either mail or email the order form to Christian_new@praxair.com.

The registration form is found at the bottom of the page at <http://nebraska.tap.waterforpeople.org/event/water-for-people-golf-scramble>. Call Patrick Harlan at 402-917-1688 with questions.

WATER UTILITY COUNCIL

From Jim Shields: On April 1st and 2nd, Jim Shields (Omaha) and Jerry Obrist (Lincoln) represented the Nebraska Section at the AWWA "Water Matters!" Fly-In in Washington, DC. Milo Rust (Chadron) was also scheduled to participate but bad weather in his area kept him grounded.

The purpose of the Fly-In is to advance AWWA's legislative issues on Capitol Hill

with the constituents of Congress carrying the messages. The Fly-In also boosts name recognition among members of Congress and helps further establish our water professionals as authoritative sources of knowledge and expertise on drinking water issues with members of Congress and their staffs.

The Fly-In is a two-day event. We begin the first morning with briefings and discussions of current drinking water issues before Congress and issues that we want to bring before Congress. The afternoon and the next morning are set aside for AWWA members to visit their members of Congress. All 5 Nebraska congressional offices were visited and we also attended the Nebraska Breakfast. This breakfast is held every Wednesday morning as a way for visitors to the capital to meet their representatives in a more informal setting.

Current issue papers from the AWWA:
AWWA issue paper: WIFIA
AWWA issue paper: financing
AWWA issue paper: chemical spills
AWWA issue paper: cybersecurity

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

From Justin Stine: The YP committee has been firming up our spring and summer offerings. We have a treatment facility tour and optional social event scheduled for April 25th in Council Bluffs. Manufacturing and other treatment systems tours will also be coming forward in the next couple of months, so please watch your emails.

Regulatory Reminders

By Doug Woodbeck • Nebraska DHHS

Currently the Department of Health and Human Services is preparing for development of regulation revisions. One revision will integrate the components of the Revised Total Coliform Rule (RTCR) into regulation (incorporating parts of nine separate Title 179 chapters). Three existing chapters are also under consideration for revision: Those are 179 NAC 21 and 22 (Water System Operation and Maintenance), and 179 NAC 15 (Capacity Development).

Whenever regulations are proposed for or require revision, the Department must go through the "stakeholder" process. This means that the input from regulated entities must be sought and considered before any regulation may be moved forward for official adoption. During this process, if meaningful comments are made, the proposed regulations can be modified to better serve the regulated entities while still complying with the federal regulatory requirements.

The Department has set up a video-streaming Internet event to gather stakeholder input for these four rules. Video-streaming allows those logging into the event to see the State staff making the presentation, to see PowerPoint slides depicting the proposed regulatory changes, and to submit questions and comments via e-mail to a predetermined e-mail address. This mode of business also allows those that would not normally be able to travel to an event such as this to participate without having to leave their community, assuming they have Internet access (yet another reason to acquire Internet capability for your public water system). The video-streaming event is scheduled for June 3, 2014 and will begin at 10:00 AM CDT and run until 2:00 PM (9:00 AM to 1:00 PM

MDT). Logon information is:
Desktop and mobile devices:
<http://channel.vbrick.com/NET/MultiDeviceIndex.aspx>
Desktop only:
<http://channel.vbrick.com/NET/Index.aspx>
E-mail comments may be sent to doug.woodbeck@nebraska.gov during or following the event.

From 10:00 AM until 11:00 AM, we will be presenting information (start-up and shut-down plan requirements) from the Revised Total Coliform Rule (RTCR) which only pertains to seasonal water systems. A seasonal public water system is that which operates for less than 12 months per year and the system (wells, distribution, storage, or any part thereof) is depressurized/dewatered for an extended period of time (in excess of 30 calendar days) and brought back into service at the beginning of the operating season. This definition (seasonal) does not include partial system shut-downs due to scheduled or emergency maintenance or other similar functions, but only those that, as part of their normal operation, shut down for a period of time then re-open at a later date. An example would be a recreational camping area that is only open from April 1 through September 30 of every year, where during the closed months the system (or part of the system) is shut down and drained or depressurized. I hope this is clear, but if not, please contact the Department for further clarification (DHHS 402-471-2541).

From 11:00 AM until 2:00 PM, we will be discussing and accepting comment on Chapters 15, 21, 22 and the remainder of the RTCR, which will affect all public water systems. I look forward to having

Woodbeck/continued

many viewers and receiving thoughtful comments and suggestions regarding these proposed regulatory revisions.

As the chapters become available, working copies, showing strikethrough

and underline (new) will be posted on the Department's webpage. To view the proposed regulations as they become available, you may go to http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/Pages/enh_pwsindex.aspx.

Drinking Water Week

By Mary Poe • Public Info Chair • Nebraska DHHS

The Public Information committee has planned for the 2014 Drinking Water Week. Letters have been sent to the mayors of 38 first- and second-class cities, inviting them to issue a proclamation declaring May 4-10 as Drinking Water Week in their communities. Three press releases related to Drinking Water Week were sent to several Nebraska newspapers, and five Facebook posts are scheduled to display during the week. Here is what those Facebook updates will say:

- Today marks the first day of Drinking Water Week. Are you hosting plant tours to celebrate? Giving a community or school talk? Has your mayor signed a proclamation?
- Happy Drinking Water Week! Thanks to the nearly 300 individual members of the Nebraska Section AWWA for their efforts to deliver clean, safe drinking water to Nebraska.
- This Drinking Water Week, take a moment to read about the Safe Drinking Water Act, which regulates drinking water safety nationwide
- Fun fact for Drinking Water Week: It takes 32 gallons of water to make just one

glass of wine.

- Nebraska could need nearly \$2 billion over the next 20 years to make sure we have safe drinking water for all. What are you doing to help spread the word about a need that affects us all?

We invite and encourage you to share those updates and add your own comments during Drinking Water Week so that your friends and family can learn more about the work of public water systems.

Call for Papers

By Doug Woodbeck • Nebraska DHHS

The Nebraska Section of the American Water Works Association is in the planning stages preparing for the upcoming Fall Conference to be held on November 6 & 7, 2014, at the Younes Conference Center in Kearney, Nebraska. If you or someone you know has a topic of interest that would be good to present at this conference, such as innovative drinking water projects, successful water conservation projects, or any other drinking water related topic, please submit your presentation via e-mail or other electronic media (PowerPoint is preferred) to

doug.woodbeck@nebraska.gov. All presentations must be related to the drinking water industry in some fashion and should be half an hour to one hour in length. If you encounter any issues in sending your information, please call me so I may rectify the issues. Please submit your presentations by May 31, 2014, so work may progress on putting the conference agenda together.

Thank you, and I'm looking forward to having some very good topics for this year's conference.

Utility Marketing Tip

By Brian Gongol • DJ Gongol & Associates

If your utility is not yet using Twitter, it's time to give it some serious thought. There are many different ways to get the word out about utility-related news and information. In an ideal world, we would all have active websites with total reliability that could be easily updated by managers in the middle of the night. In reality, though, websites are often difficult to manage and involve contracts with third parties or careful cooperation with computer people working outside the normal utility departments.

Twitter has the unique advantage among online services of being (1) easy to learn, (2) built for updates from the field, and (3) designed for brevity.

If you can send a text message, you can post a message on Twitter. Any Twitter update (or "tweet", if you prefer) is limited to 140 characters, which means you aren't expected to go on at length

about anything -- just get to the point and move along. Twitter was originally intended as an alternative to sending out group text messages, so it has always been designed around phone-based access. That makes it ideal for sharing updates from the field, whether they're notes on water-main breaks, requests for conservation, or news updates from board meetings.

As an industry, if we're going to enlist the support of our customers, we need to reach out to them and be transparent about what we do to provide them with safe drinking water every day. While it is only one of many tools for doing that, Twitter is free and is the easiest to use of all.

Mentoring Q&A with Kirk Stocker

By Mary Poe • Nebraska DHHS

Kirk Stocker is the Director of Utilities for the City of Kearney and serves as a mentor for the Section.

Wise Water Words: You are a Nebraska AWWA mentor for water conservation, so tell us what steps you take in the Kearney water system to ensure an adequate supply and to prevent wastefulness.

Kirk Stocker: In order to maintain an adequate water supply, the Water Production Division monitors water consumption very closely, not only on a daily demand basis but also on a peak-hour demand basis. They do this to be sure that the City has enough water to meet the short-term peak demand, which can at times be double the daily demand on an hourly basis.

Also, to keep up with the cost of compliance with water quality regulations and to increase capacity for a growing community, the City evaluates water rates on an annual basis and raises the rates when necessary. In 1994, the City changed its billing philosophy from a declining block rate which included a set number of gallons included in the monthly minimum, to a uniform rate on a cost-of-service basis for all customers. This means that the minimum monthly fee, the price for having water available for use, went down and the cost of the water went up. Customers pay for every gallon of water they use and only for the water they use, which is charged at the same rate for every gallon they use. This means that large-volume residential users pay their fair share and are not being subsidized by lower-volume customers who paid a higher minimum rate which included water they were not using. In addition, the City began billing

on a monthly basis rather than every other month, so this has helped residential customers be more aware of how much water they are using.

Water meters and annual evaluation of water rates and monthly billing are a significant factor in water conservation. Water can be wasted if the public water supply system does not utilize meters for billing and does not charge for the true cost of water.

In addition, the Water Production Division issues timely news releases about water conservation and lawn care. This information can also be seen on the City web page.

WWW: It sounds like you're being very proactive about conservation and about educating the public. As you know, one thing that's beyond our control is drought conditions. Have you had to issue water restrictions (either voluntary or mandatory) in dry years? If you have, at what point do you do so?

KS: The City of Kearney has been fortunate, the City has not had to issue water restrictions in the last 30+ years. The City has adequate wells and water storage to have met the demand through the last two years of extreme drought. The City has three full-time employees who maintain our wells, water towers and booster pumps. Major inspections and repairs, if necessary, are performed during the winter. In the summer months ongoing maintenance and monitoring is performed. Equipment failure has not created any emergencies that would lead to water restrictions. Additionally, the City has found that property owners usually have had enough with outdoor maintenance (they

Mentoring/continued

are tired of it) by the first week or the middle of August, so water consumption tends to start going down at that time.

WWW: Well, you must be doing things right then. Have you ever been called upon to provide your expertise to another water system?

KS: We do at times get calls about water system policies, leak repairs and water leak damage policies. But most of the calls we get are about products like

meters, valves and hydrants, and service line products like curb stops and fittings -- usually asking what our specifications require.

WWW: Thank you for being an AWWA water conservation mentor. What is the best way to get ahold of you if a water system would like your guidance?

KS: The best way to contact me is by phone, 308-233-3268.

Lead Compliance

Most everybody knows that, aside from my current role as Chair-elect for the Section, my main job is with the State of Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services working in the Public Drinking Water program. In many ways, this gives me a unique opportunity to know what is going on in the regulatory realm that some may not be aware of. The Department tries very hard to get the word out about upcoming regulatory changes and this article attempts to do just that.

One refresher, if you will, that I'd like to pass on is that the Reduction of Lead in Drinking Water Act (Public Law 111-380) became effective January 4, 2014. This is a Federal law that mandates all pipe, pipe fittings, and other appurtenances that are used to convey drinking water in any public water system be "Lead Free". With regard to pipe, pipe fittings, and related items, "lead-free" is defined by Federal statute as not containing more than a weighted average of 0.25% lead when used with respect to the wetted surfaces of the pipe. The lead content of solder, flux, and similar items for use in drinking water systems remains as it has been since 1988: 0.2% lead.

By Doug Woodbeck • Nebraska DHHS

There are exceptions to this law. If the pipe, fittings, or solder are used in non-drinking water systems (systems where drinking water is not expected to be obtained), these components need not meet the lead-ban requirement. Examples include lawn irrigation systems, pipes feeding heating system boilers, car-wash systems, and so on.

Because this Federal law is now in effect, inspectors from the Nebraska Public Water Supply Program will be checking public water systems records during their normal course of performing sanitary surveys to ensure that the law is being followed.

Compliance can be determined by the possession of a number of different types of records. One would be a statement from the manufacturer that the products that have been purchased are indeed lead-free. Another is keeping an example of the packaging from the products which states that the product is lead-free. A third example would be a statement from the supplier stating that the products they sold you meet the lead-free requirement.

WARN Continues to Grow

By Rick Melcher • City of Aurora

Nebraska had discussed becoming involved with the Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network in 2007 by creating a leadership team made up of state agencies and community water operators. After several months of gathering information on the benefits of providing a WARN organization, we began developing an agreement and became a WARN State, known today as "NEWARN". While the NEWARN Agreement was being developed, we had asked for a review from all interested communities and their attorneys to assist with improving the agreement to suit the needs of every community. The final draft of the NEWARN agreement had been completed in the first quarter of 2008, with the signing of the first NEWARN agreement coming in the spring of 2008. Nebraska became the 24th state to provide a WARN organization.

There currently are approximately 170 NEWARN Member Communities with 47 of those members providing resources (including equipment and materials) to communities during and/or after an emergency event. If there are any

Member Communities needing assistance with registering their resources, please don't hesitate to contact a NEWARN board member or a neighboring NEWARN Member Community.

The NEWARN Board feels the program is doing very well as the membership of NEWARN continues to grow and is adding valuable resources for use during an emergency event by the addition of every new member. Nebraska is fortunate to be a state with many communities that have helped one another for many years and the NEWARN Agreement formalizes those inter-community assistance activities. By way of the agreement, villages and city councils recognize the importance of becoming members of NEWARN.

As indicated in the agreement, there is no charge to becoming a member of NEWARN. Feel free to visit the website and review the details of the agreement. Your participation helps all the NEWARN member communities in assisting other communities during and after natural or manmade disasters. If you have any questions, feel free to contact us.

The Concept of Assets

By Mike Wentink • Nebraska DHHS

A current "buzz phrase" used frequently in the water industry is "asset management." The process itself has actually been in practice for many years, but may have been practiced under different names. Within its broad definition, it is simply monitoring and maintaining items of value. Those items of value includes tangible objects and also intangible items such as intellectual property, patents and goodwill (factors that tend to make income rates high relative to investment). Within the water industry, most if not all of the focus is on tangible items such as pipes, pumps, and source water. One very important asset of any utility that is often overlooked is the knowledge and experience of the water operator who monitors and maintains the public water system assets.

It can be a challenge to associate all of the characteristics of the operator with terms commonly used in the practice of asset management, but some similarities exist. For example, the operator has an expected life (employment) span, as would pipe. The difference is that the intangible asset of institutional knowledge within the operator increases over time, where the flow characteristics of the pipe generally decreases. The values attributed to water system staffing are often regarded by utility decision-makers as merely an expense through salaries and other payroll costs. Often, minimal attention is given to the idea that institutional knowledge is an asset that might be measured and reported as such. Maintaining that asset (the operator) does take some investment over the long term, but does result in an increasing value in water system staff.

Like many other states, Nebraska has an

aging water-industry workforce as Baby Boomers close in on retirement. Findings of a survey conducted by the Nebraska Section AWWA in 2009 indicated at that time that 12% of licensed water operators were ages 60 to 64, and an additional 9% of licensed water operators working in the public system were 65 or older. This 21% total reflects that about one out of five licensed water operators in public water systems were likely to retire in the following five to ten years (and that survey was conducted five years ago). Asset management also entails planning to eventually replace assets with "new equipment" of equal or greater capabilities. In the field of human resources, that process is called succession planning. That same replacement rule applies to any asset that is critical to the effective performance of the water system.

It is difficult to place a value on such an intangible asset. However, it is vitally important that water system owners view the operator as an asset, one that does appreciate in value as experience and institutional knowledge is gained. When replacement time comes by way of operator retirement, hopefully that wealth of institutional knowledge has been transferred to the replacement through the appropriate amount and type of experience necessary to succeed in the operations of the water system.

Water for People Golf Scramble

By Christian New • Praxair

The Water for People committee is hosting another golf event this year at the Woodland Hills Golf Course in Eagle. This year's event will be held on May 9th, with a 1:30 pm shotgun start following the 9:30 am board meeting. The entry fee of \$90 per person or \$360 per foursome includes 18 holes of golf, a cart, flag prizes, and a steak dinner. Approximately \$20 of each entry fee will be donated to Water for People. Hole sponsorships and flag prizes are invited.

Training Calendar

May 6 [Central CC] – Geneva (water)
May 13 [Nebraska Rural Water] – Plainview (water)
May 14 [Nebraska Rural Water] – Ord (water)
May 14 [Nebraska Rural Water] – Sidney (backflow)
May 14 [Nebraska Rural Water] – Omaha (wastewater)
May 15 [Nebraska Rural Water] – North Platte (backflow)
May 15 [Nebraska WEA] – Columbus (wastewater)
May 20 [Nebraska Rural Water] – Wahoo (water)
May 20 [Dept. of Public Health] – Beatrice (PWS Reg Review)
May 21 - 22 [Dept. of Public Health] – Grade 4 Course – Beatrice
May 29 [League of Nebraska Municipalities] – Pawnee City (wastewater)
June 4 [Nebraska Rural Water] – Fairbury (wastewater)
June 6 [Nebraska Rural Water] – Sutton (water)
June 10 [Central CC] – McCook (backflow)
June 10 - 13 [Nebraska Rural Water] – Wastewater Course – Wahoo
June 10 - 12 [R. Irwin - Wastewater Services Co.] – Lincoln
June 17 - 18 [R. Irwin - Wastewater Services Co.] – Lincoln
June 19 [NDEQ] – Lincoln (wastewater test day)
July 8 [Central CC] – Columbus (water)
July 9 [League of Nebraska Municipalities] – Gering (wastewater)
July 15 [Nebraska Rural Water] – Chadron (water)
July 16 [Nebraska Rural Water] – Valentine (water)
July 17 - 18 [NWOD] – Heartland Wastewater Conference – Kearney
July 22 [Dept. of Public Health] – Scottsbluff (PWS Reg Review)
July 23 - 24 [Dept. of Public Health] – Grade 4 Course – Scottsbluff
July 29 [Nebraska Rural Water] – O'Neill (wastewater)

