

Backflow Training Update

By Barney Whatley
Deputy Circuit Rider

It seems as though I have hardly started and already the training year is almost over. As training classes are scheduled, the agenda generally remains the same from September through May. No classes are scheduled through the summer months, as most of the grade six operators are bust during that time. The training calendars all run with a normal calendar year, but I look over all of the class evaluations during the summer months to determine what the agenda for the next nine months of backflow classes will be. I do consider all recommendations that I receive, but it seems that about half of the attendees want more hands-on training and the other half want less hands-on training. Any Grade six operator employed by a public water system who would like to “brush up” on their testing skills can call the NeRWA office and leave me a message to that effect. I will be willing to bring a test bench and a test kit to your system for some one-on-one testing. Grade six operators who do not work for a water system can request this service through the water system near them. The most recent training sessions have some different hands-on training, consisting of rebuilding the test benches we have and then testing them to see if they were put together correctly. This seemed to be enjoyable, helpful and informative for most of the attendees at the training sessions, but it has wreaked havoc on my test benches and my supply of spare parts. It seems that I will need to rebuild my supply of repair parts before doing much more hands-on training.

If any Grade six operator has any suggestions as to what they would like to see on the agenda for upcoming training, please contact the office and leave a message. I will consider all suggestions in setting up the training. I will also be setting up the dates and locations of training sessions for the calendar year 2006 during the summer. If any system would like to host a class, they just need to let me know prior to the class locations being set. If a certified operator who is not associated with a water system would like to see a class in his community, just call, e-mail, fax or write to NeRWA and give the name of the community. I will still be willing to contact that community to see if they are willing to host a training seminar.

In order to host a seminar, a system needs to have a meeting room that can handle 25 to 40 people, preferably with a nearby location where test benches can be connected to a water supply for hands-on testing. There also needs to be somewhere in the area where lunch can be obtained. NeRWA supplies lunch for Grade six classes, and we can go to a local restaurant or have the meal catered. I prefer to have the lunch in a place away from the classroom, to give the attendees an opportunity to stretch their legs and get away from the chair they have been sitting in all morning. If the hosting system can provide coffee and rolls for the breaks, NeRWA will give the system a free registration to the class.

The most recent sessions have been approved for five hours of continuing education credit for Grade six certificate holders, five hours for wastewater certificate holders, two hours for Grade one through four water operator certificate holders and five hours for Omaha Plumbing License holders. If anyone attending these seminars is interested in receiving continuing education hours for some other certificate, they need to contact me and give me the name of the organization that issues the certificate and the name of the contact person I would need to contact in that organization. I cannot

guarantee that I can receive any recertification hours, but I will submit the agenda for their consideration.

I hope to hear from many of you Grade six operators throughout the summer giving me ideas and suggestions for topics to be covered in upcoming training seminars. I wish you all a very productive summer and look forward to seeing you at training seminars starting in the fall.