

Call for Help

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Throughout the years, the Nebraska Rural Water Association (NeRWA) has been called to assist many of the water systems in the state. The field staff have traveled across the state and met with the owners or operators of most of the systems within the state. With the changes in the regulations governing public water supplies and new sanitary surveys being completed on all systems in the state, the field staff find themselves busier than ever. As a result of this, there are fewer stops being made in systems to visit with the operators and see how things are going. Most of the visits are due to requests from the systems, and yet there are some systems in the state that could use some assistance, but do not request it for one reason or another. Some smaller systems or systems with new operators may not be aware of NeRWA or the variety of services that are offered. We have staff and equipment to assist systems with routine maintenance functions as well as the ability to assist them in avoiding violations and possibly avoid receiving Administrative Orders. We feel sad when we see a system receive a list of violations or an Administrative Order that might have been avoided had we been aware of the situation and able to assist the system in time.

NeRWA staff are always ready to assist systems with routine maintenance chores using the equipment we have. We have several pipe locaters that can be used to trace metallic water mains and to locate main valves, hydrant valves and curb boxes. Knowing where these appurtenances are in advance can save valuable time during a leak. We also have a leak correlater and a number of data loggers that can be used to assist a system in locating minor water leaks that might be adversely affecting their water loss. We have several water pressure recorders that can be used by systems to check system pressure in higher elevations over a period of time to verify that they exceed the minimum state requirements. These will also assist a system in determining if the water mains in any particular area are being subjected to water hammer due to well starts and stops or industrial uses within the system. Fire Hydrant flow testers are also available for systems to use to determine the ability of the system to protect its residents in case of a major fire. These can also assist a system in applying for a better insurance rating if there have been substantial improvements in the infrastructure. The system has also had a pipe freezer donated that can assist systems in isolating smaller lines to replace or insert valves or repair minor leaks.

NeRWA personnel are always willing to assist systems in avoiding violations when possible. With the new requirements for taking static and pumping levels from system wells, the use of an electronic well sounder may be the answer to the problem. Before purchasing a well sounder, the system might want to borrow one from NeRWA to determine if that is the method they want to use to comply with this requirement. The purchase of this equipment is a fairly large expense to a system, especially if they subsequently decide this is not the optimum method for the system to use. If the system needs to determine whether a well is under the influence of surface water, or if they need temperature and pH measurements in conjunction with water samples to determine the need for asbestos sampling, NeRWA has the equipment for taking these measurements.

We can schedule to meet with the operator of the system as needed to take these samples for the state. When a system owns testable backflow preventers, NeRWA has certified test equipment that the system can borrow to complete the required annual testing. The system must provide the certified Grade 6 operator, but NeRWA will lend the equipment and any technical assistance needed to complete the testing. NeRWA field staff are also willing to assist systems in completing required forms and reports. Emergency phone contact lists, emergency plans, short and long-term plans and cross connection control surveys and public information brochures are examples of the items that can be tailored for the individual systems. NeRWA also has sample ordinances to cover cross connection control, well encroachments and well drilling and testing within the system's jurisdiction.

To assist systems in avoiding Administrative Orders for coliform violations, NeRWA has chlorine injection pumps that systems can borrow for maintenance chlorination to clear up a temporary problem. Field staff will deliver the pumps and assist the system in calibrating and setting them. We also have a limited number of chlorine residual testers we can lend to systems to determine the effectiveness of their disinfection procedures. If a system can clean up a problem with maintenance chlorination, it can save the system from having to purchase a chlorine pump and a residual tester. These items will cost a system in the neighborhood of \$600, and this is a large expense for a system that only has coliform problem on a sporadic basis.

NeRWA is well known by water operators for the training provided for water operator, backflow and wastewater recertification classes across the state, but we would like to have more systems that find themselves in temporary trouble call for assistance. It is much easier to avoid a major problem than it is to repair the damage after a violation has been noted or an Administrative Order has been issued. Please call the NeRWA office at the first sign of trouble, and together we can try to keep the problem as a maintenance concern rather than a public health concern.