

Pre-Conference Insight

By Charles Bausch

Training Specialist

As of June 1, I have officially moved from being the Groundwater Specialist to being the Training Specialist. This should not be a big change since I have been filling in by doing the water operator training since December. I am excited about this new endeavor and hope to bring some new training opportunities to all the hard working water operators in Nebraska.

One of my first tasks will be the Fall Conference in Gering. This year we will once again offer a pre-conference to bring more continuing education hours to operators. This year's pre-conference will cover emergency preparedness. Emergency preparedness is something most operators do not take the time to think about or to prepare for. During this training class we plan to focus on what you will do when you have to pull that emergency plan off the shelf and actually use it.

The first part of the pre-conference will be your emergency plan. Topics discussed will include who should be included on your plan and do they know what their duty is when called upon. An emergency plan with a lot of numbers and names looks good, but if these people don't know what to do or that they are even on your contact list, what good is the emergency call list in the first place.

Another part of pre-conference will be a panel discussion with state and local officials on what they experienced in the 2006 ice storm that struck several communities in Nebraska. This will be a question and answer session with the people that experienced this emergency situation from the trenches. This should give us good insight into what part of the emergency plan worked and what parts needed to be revised.

The next part of the pre-conference will be a table-top exercise. During this portion of the class, participants are given an emergency situation that they must preplan for. Participants will start with several different points of view such as a Financial Committee, WARN (Water/Wastewater Response Network) Committee, Utility Committee and look at each group's responsibility during each stage of an emergency. This should provide good hands-on experience for all participants and a good opportunity to apply the information gained from the first two sessions.

The final session of the day will involve the WARN network. During this time there will be discussion over the WARN network, how to be involved in WARN, who can be involved with WARN, and several other topics. I'm sure by now many of you have heard of WARN, but some of you may not know what role WARN will play in an emergency.

Our goal at the end of pre-conference will be for participants to be able to prepare for several different types of emergency situations, and, additionally, to have information they can take back to their community and immediately put into practice during an emergency situation. Remember, an emergency can happen anytime, and the only control we have is how we respond to the situation. Good emergency planning is the key to a speedy recovery.

As I said before I look forward to getting out and meeting more of you in my new position. If you ever have questions do not hesitate to give me a call. I hope to see you at our Fall Conference in Gering.