

Spring Is On the Way
By Mike Lucas, Wastewater Technician

One of the sure signs of spring is increased activity and phone calls. In this article I am going to discuss multiple subjects related to phone calls and emails that I've received within the last few weeks.

Notices have been sent out from NDEQ alerting certified operators that their operator licenses are expiring in July. Be sure to check your CEU's. If there are errors contact NDEQ or your training provider. If you need additional hours I have three classes prior to July. Check the coalition calendar for other classes. For on-line options that are also available contact Mike McBride at NDEQ. Also Barney's one day backflow classes have 5 hours of wastewater CEU's.

My goal is to try to have classes available across the state within a reasonable distance for everyone. I scheduled 12 one day classes across the state in 2014 along with our two conferences. The conferences typically have at least ten WW CEU's available depending on which sessions that you attend.

Another sure sign of spring is the 100% guaranteed line locators (backhoes) are coming out of hibernation. I can generally locate sewer lines (both service lines and mains) with approximate depths provided that there is access to the line for my camera. Please call well in advance of the dig date. It's a good idea to make sure that your decision makers are informed regarding damages to lines and who is responsible.

Disposable (**NOT FLUSHABLE**) wipes are continuing to cause problems across the state. I have sample flyers from the Water Environment Federation informing the public of their responsibility to help prevent backups. Also while we are discussing sewer backups just a reminder about the requirements to notify NDEQ of sewer backups determined to have originated from the City main. NDEQ takes it seriously and fines of \$10,000.00 per day have been proposed. I urge you to have a formal collection system maintenance program that you adhere to and of course document. I also have sample copies of these.

I hope that each of you has another operator or someone who backs you up or is at least aware of what you do. Every year the unexpected happens and the system and customers are left without an operator. It's not fair to you or the customers to allow this condition to exist. If this happens the system needs to communicate with NDEQ and certainly call NeRWA for help as needed. That is what we are here for.

Those of you with discharging lagoons need to be planning for the future. With your new NPDES permits you are probably required to have additional tests. Ever more restrictive discharge limits are going to make compliance very difficult. Investigate your options such as land application and total containment. Also well in advance of any construction address inflow/infiltration problems. I can help you with sewer smoking. Do flow metering and consider installing water meters if you have none. If you don't address these issues prior to construction then the scope/size of the project will likely increase, not to mention the \$'s. It is discouraging when I visit systems considering discontinuing the use of some existing lagoons while paying debt service on new lagoons that they have never even used.

USDA and NDEQ have monies available for projects and planning. They are encouraging systems to apply. Systems with compliance issues will get preference. Your contact with NDEQ is Dawn Martin. Many of you know her from her work with DMR's. Along that same line Sam Capps, Program Specialist with NDEQ, is helping with my classes. She is responsible for the new Assessing Wastewater Infrastructure Needs (AWIN) program for NDEQ. It could potentially be a very beneficial program for small systems. I encourage you to attend her presentations and invite your Village Clerks and Board Members to attend also. Your community and rate payers could possibly reap the benefits.

That completes a litany of topics from many of the calls that I have received. I know that there are many of you waiting for me to get to your requests (approximately 25 give or take). Please be patient and also call or email a reminder to me. I know that sometimes I have missed messages and I don't want anyone falling through the cracks. Contact me on my cell phone at (402)443-6157 or email me at lucas@nerwa.org.

Have a good and safe construction season.