

# Reaching Out for Assistance

By Mike Stanzel, Circuit Rider

How many of you really know what the staff at the Nebraska Rural Water Association does?

I am asking this to see if I can get everyone's attention. I travel extensively throughout this great state and I am guessing I have probably worked in or visited 90% of all the towns under 10,000 population. We cannot assist towns with a greater population.

There are towns that call me on a regular basis to assist with leaks, locating, chlorination, paperwork, etc. And then there are towns that only call when it's something big like a leak locate or emergency disinfection, which is fine. Then there are several towns that never call at all, and that makes me wonder if they really know what we do and what we can offer to our members. This especially applies to new operators that may not have even heard about us.

So this got me thinking about how to reach out to operators about what the Nebraska Rural Water Association can do to help them. The following are some of the services and equipment we offer. We do line locating, curb stop locating, valve exercising, pressure recording, leak detection, leak locating, hydrant flow testing, chlorination, all HHS required

paperwork, mapping, vulnerability assessments, water and sewer rate studies, training - both onsite and classroom and source water protection plans. We have backflow testing equipment, a variety of water testing equipment, such as colorimeters and nitrate testers, pressure relief valves, a waterline freeze kit and a valve exerciser. This is only a basic list of what we own and what we offer. And all of these services and equipment are FREE of charge to our members, though donations are appreciated and used to maintain our equipment.

What really inspired this article was an incident I was informed about by one of our Board Members. A neighboring town had just recently sent their new maintenance man to obtain his grade 4 water license which he successfully passed. However the very first time he attempted to take his routine coliform sample, he obtained an E-coli positive. After investigation, chlorination, notification and a boil water notice, it was determined that the cause was from operator error. This most likely could have been prevented had he reached out to us for assistance.

Combining our field staff's total years of experience in this industry I am estimating that we have somewhere between 125-130 years of experience. Also, all of our contracts that we work under from USDA, EPA, and DHHS require us to perform a certain number of onsite visits per month. Randy Hellbusch and I, for example, have to have 30 contacts/onsite visits per

month: working at a system for 1 hour = 1 contact, over 2 hours = 2 contacts, over 5 hours = 3 contacts (the max we can obtain per day per system). Please don't think you are bothering us if you need assistance with anything at all pertaining to your water and wastewater systems. Please contact us. We can help. That is our job.