

New Opportunities

By Mike Stanzel, Source Water Specialist

My career with NeRWA started on October 1, 2008, when I was hired as a Deputy Circuit Rider working under a state-awarded contract called the “Technical/Managerial” or 2% Contract. When I was hired for this, I was nervous as heck to say the least. My first day was a breeze! They said show up at 7:00 am and help with our one-day training Expo in Fremont, Nebraska. No problem!

Day #2: Come to the office first thing in the morning and complete all your paperwork. No problem! Then go to Best Buy and get yourself a laptop computer. PROBLEM!!! I didn’t even know how to turn one of those things on, let alone know how to use it. But with a little crash course from Barney, I was up and rolling. Almost every aspect of my job revolves around my laptop; daily logs, reports, travel vouchers, state forms, policies, ordinances, etc.

With the Deputy Circuit Rider job I was required to travel to assist public water systems throughout the state with mainly compliance issues and other problems with their water system. For the past five years I have estimated that I have assisted over 1200 systems doing everything from paperwork to line locating, leak detection, hydrant repair, draw down training, coliform issues, valve replacement and troubleshooting, just to name a few.

I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting and working with so many operators and clerks over the years and developed a lot of friendships. I can truly say that I “liked” getting up and going to work every day, which I don’t think too many people can say.

So it is with a heavy heart that I tell all of you that the state contract was up for bids and NeRWA was not awarded the contract this time.

We still have two circuit riders, Randy and Russ, who will still be assisting all of our members. But needless to say, their workload just got a little heavier.

Fortunately the National Rural Water Association has found funding to reinstate the Source Water Specialist position and our board of directors offered it to me. This is the “New Opportunity” I am writing about. Thankfully I am still employed for this great organization. This is going to feel like my second day on the job for a while until I get my feet wet.

I am not real sure about what this new position is going to entail. However, I do know that I will still be working with various towns and villages developing source water protection plans to protect your drinking water from possible contaminants. I look at this position as a learning opportunity to increase my knowledge and learn a different aspect of my career as a water operator.