

35th Annual Nebraska Rural Water Conference

By Pat Petersen, Training Specialist

As a water operator for 21 years I always looked forward to the month of March. Not only because spring was just around the corner but because the Nebraska Rural Water Association would be holding their annual conference. This year's conference will be a milestone for the rural water association - this will be our 35th annual conference. For 35 years the Nebraska Rural Water Association has strived to provide the best educational tools for water operators and systems throughout the state of Nebraska. This conference, entitled "Water, the Necessity of Life," will continue that educational tradition.

The annual conference is scheduled for March 18-20, 2013, in Grand Island, Nebraska, at the Heartland Events Center. This will be our second year to hold our conference at this larger venue. The bigger venue has allowed us to provide more exhibitors with more room to showcase their products and also to have an area for hands-on classroom time. This year there will be hands-on sessions and four or five concurrent sessions for operators, so you can choose where you think you will learn the most. The format of the conference will resemble those we have held in the past but hopefully you will all find new faces not only in the presenters but the operators and exhibitors also.

The conference will start on Monday afternoon, March 18th, at 1 pm with the general session which focuses on areas that will be of interest to all people from operators to administrators and council members. State of Nebraska Drinking Water Administrator, Jack Daniel, will address the audience with his regulatory update, followed by a regulatory update from the EPA. Several changes have been made with many drinking water rules and regulations so please try to attend this session for the updates. Other highlights of the general session will include an update of current drought conditions in Nebraska, USDA/Rural Development security grants and certain NDEQ funding options. Village board and city council members may attend this general session free, so operators, encourage your bosses to ride along on Monday. An evening meal will be served at 6 pm in the arena following the general session. Then join us back at the Midtown Holiday Inn for a night of fun and games with a chance to win great prizes.

Training sessions on Tuesday will begin at 9 am and should conclude around 5:45 pm. The day will be filled with opportunities to learn about several areas in the drinking water field. Water tanks, asset management, an update from Digger's hotline and, of course, Barney's favorite-"The Backflow Exercise" are just a few I would like to mention. If you operate a small system, don't miss your chance to discuss issues with other small system operators at our "Small Systems Roundtable." Another round table discussion will be held for rural water systems and, new this year, a backflow roundtable discussion to talk about things you have seen or things you never want to see! At 5:45 pm there will be a social hour followed by a banquet with awards and entertainment.

Everyone will be ready to enjoy a good breakfast Wednesday morning so join us in the arena for a complimentary breakfast followed by the NeRWA annual business meeting. Training sessions will then resume at 8:30 am and conclude at 2 pm.

Blocks of rooms have been made available at the Midtown Holiday Inn, Best Western, and Super 8 Motels in Grand Island. Make your reservations now so you don't miss out on all of the learning and fun!