

WHO NEEDS TRAINING?

by Patrick Petersen,
Training Specialist

As we wrap up our 35th successful annual conference the need to focus on training for the upcoming year lingers in my head. What is it they need to know? When is the best time to hold these classes? Where should we hold the classes? Why do we need to address these issues? How do we want to get the point across? I think you can all see where I'm going with this. What, when, where, why, how, and now introducing the next important question; who?

Over the years the Nebraska Rural Water Association has provided training classes for water operators throughout the state. I am specifically saying water operators because the majority of the attendees are just that. The training classes we provide are more than just a day to gather 5 of the 10 CEU's needed for the renewal of a water operator's license. The conference and one-day training classes provide information about regulation updates, safety issues, drought mitigation, sampling methods and many more issues the water operator may face, as well as, a place to network. Hint: These educational opportunities are also very helpful to village boards, city councils, city administrators, and clerks.

I have been the training specialist now for 7 months and if one thing is constant when it comes to training ideas, it is how to reach the mayor, council members, board members and others involved with day-to-day operations of a water system. At our conference, board members are given a free pass for the general session. This session usually will last the entire afternoon of the first day of the conference, and focus on state and federal regulation, issues such as the drought, and funding options for the small water systems. Along with the free pass they will also receive a wonderful meal at the conclusion of the session.

As an operator we know the most important person that needs the same training as ourselves is our assistant or back-up. He/she will learn from you just by being in the well house, treatment plant, or even in the office doing paperwork. On the flip side of that a board member will not see the reason you have an air bubble at the well house, (drawdown testing) or know the definition of ERP (Emergency Response Plan) or CCR (Consumer Confidence Report) because they are not that person standing next to you. These are not just props of a water operator, these are the "tools" or the "glue" that keep a water system operating in an efficient manner daily, weekly and, of course, yearly. For water operators and especially those operators out there that are a "one man show" it is the conference or the one-day training sessions that give you the opportunity to show your mayor, board members, council members, etc. what it really takes to be a proficient operator. So the next training session you attend, ask a council member, mayor, administrator or clerk to ride along and sit in, it just might be the most beneficial training you and everyone will have.

Once again I want to thank everyone who attended the annual conference this year! It was a tremendous success and I look forward to seeing a lot of you in the fall.

