

Western Conference

By Pat Petersen, Training Specialist

As the summer heat continues to warm us up, it's time for me to start looking towards the fall season and planning the western conference. Once again the Nebraska Rural Water Association will be heading west to Gering, Nebraska and invading the Gering Convention Center for 3 days of learning and fun. This year the pre-conference will take place on Tuesday, September 15th. The conference its self will be held Wednesday, September 16th in the afternoon and then Thursday, September 17th will be an entire day of training sessions.

A preliminary theme for the pre-conference will be "What the Future Holds for Your Water System." If all things come together we will focus on the specific things that can and will affect your water system now and in the future. Certain topics we hope to discuss at the pre-conference may include; infrastructure, new metering, budgeting and finally operator replacement. This should be a very good session to help all operators and city leaders see how the water world is changing. Following the Pre-Conference, the annual golf tournament will take place. If you have any questions about the golf tournament you can contact myself or Randy Hellbusch.

The traditional morning at the trap range or the poker run through the western sandhills will take place on Wednesday morning. Operators will have a chance to show off their trapshooting skills or relax on a 3 hour motorcycle ride before training sessions begin. If you are interested in the trapshoot you can contact Mike Stanzel. DHHS Area 8 Field Rep., Doug Woodbeck, and Scottsbluff water operator, Jack Satur, will be heading the Poker Run which will begin in front of the Gering Convention Center.

Howard Isaacs will give the annual regulatory update to kick off the conference. For those of you who may not know, Howard has stepped into the position that was held by Jack Daniel. Following Howard will be a presentation by Bill Podraza of Miller and Associates giving operators advice on how to approach and speak with their governing board or council. Rich Koenig will finish up the day on Wednesday with a presentation about a situation that happened to him. Rich is the DHHS Field Rep. for Area 3 and his presentation is entitled "We Don't Know What Happened, Now What?" A social hour and awards banquet will finish off our Wednesday festivities. This looks like it will be a great start to our fun fall conference!

Thursday, September 17th will begin with the operators' breakfast followed by 6 hours of training sessions. Some of the sessions include: Sample Sites/Assessments, Wastewater Operator Certification, Disinfection Bi-products and several opportunities for backflow education. Recertification hours will be sent in for approval for water operators, wastewater operators, Grade 6 operators and well-drillers.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to thank Russ Topp for everything he has taught me in the wonderful world of water. Thanks, Russ! Enjoy your retirement. You deserve it!