

The Other Classes

By Pat Petersen, Training Specialist

For those of you who read my articles, you have probably noticed I talk a lot about the upcoming conferences and what happened at the “past” conferences. Well, this article will focus on some of the different types of training NeRWA has to offer. Don’t get me wrong, the gears of the Western Conference have a fresh coat of grease and are in forward motion but I thought this would be a great time to talk about our Effective Utility Management classes and the Trenching and Shoring and Confined Space Safety classes.

The Circuit Riders, the Wastewater Technician and myself have been required to hold a series of “Effective Utility Management” classes throughout the state. These training classes are focused more on managerial (Board Member) responsibilities and how to carry out day to day, month to month and the annual procedures it takes to operate a water or wastewater system. These classes focus on ten utility management areas and allow us to dive into your system’s good things and bad things if you are willing to step forward and tell us about them. These classes are built around the problems systems are facing, the good things systems are doing and working as a team to build on the good and improve what may need improvement. The rural water staff basically is in charge of “lighting the fuse” and then watching the participants interact with their issues. The past three classes of this nature were held in Pawnee City, Ord and Tobias. They were all very well attended and we actually ran out of time because of the participation of those in attendance!

Once again, Mike Lucas will be in charge of scheduling two of these classes in the year ahead. One is already set for August 24th in Albion. He is in the final stages of his annual scheduling so the other class will be on the website soon.

For those of you who would like to see the information that is used at these sessions feel free to contact me and I will bring it to you. It is a pretty nifty workbook that is jam packed with loads of information that would help any new operator, board member or clerk. Heck, I think it will even help out a seasoned, veteran operator!!

For most of you operators, you know how important it is to be safe when excavating or working in trenches. Each year the NeRWA offers a Competent Person for Trench Safety course and a Confined Space Entry course. These classes are fee-based but if you ask any of those who have attended these courses I’m sure you will hear that it was well worth it.

Midwest Fire from Burlington, Kansas will once again be in Wahoo at our office to provide probably some of the most “hands-on” training one could ask for. They bring along a monster of a trailer that can act both as a trench and a confined space. When in the trench mode, participants learn how to build and use specific types of shoring and will be lowered into a trench using a tripod. Many operators are a little apprehensive to do the tripod work but after they do it they seem to realize how much safer they really felt.

In the confined space mode, operators learn different techniques on how to enter a confined space and the difference between a confined space and a permit required confined space entry. Each class, also, has a couple hours of classroom time and a competent person exam at the conclusion. It is not only an

opportunity to brush up on one's safety skills but water and wastewater hours are offered for each day of attendance and backflow hours are also offered for the Confined Space Entry course.

Some of the other safety factors that are mentioned at these classes are the lock out, tag out procedures, gas metering and detection, and proper entry and egress for several different types of situations. The success of these classes depends on class participation and the willingness to learn new things. Most of the attendees really seem to enjoy these classes. As a matter of fact, there are a couple operators already signed up this year that came last year.

So remember when you're looking at your year of upcoming classes, don't be afraid to try something a little different like these classes I mentioned. And if you really want to make an impression, ask a board or council member to come along. This may help them understand your job just a little better!

As always, thank you to all of you who continue to support our training classes and certification training. It is a pleasure working with all of you!

Now, where did I put that Western Conference Agenda.....