

# Fall Conference Rundown

By Pat Petersen, Training/Technical Assistance Specialist

On September 16, 17 and 18, 2014, the Nebraska Rural Water Association held its Western Fall Conference in Gering, Nebraska. The Pre-conference which was held on Tuesday had a theme of "Safety in the Workplace." Bob Hessler with Safetyline Consultants gave four eye-opening training sessions focusing on safety issues including Work Zone Safety, Hot and Cold Weather Safety, Personal Protective Equipment and a Trench Safety Refresher. Rob Pierce with the League of Nebraska Municipalities finished the Pre-conference with an hour pertaining to the Components of Electrical Safety.

Following the Pre-conference, operators, exhibitors and staff headed out to the golf course for an afternoon of fun. It was a beautiful day for the golfers to show off their talents. Most importantly, the hole sponsors for this event were: Baker and Associates, Hawkins Inc., HD Supply, HOA, Johnson Service, MaGuire Iron, M.C.Schaff, Miller and Associates, Municipal Supply and Sargent Drilling. Fun activities like this would not be possible without the generosity of these great sponsors.

Municipal Automation was the sponsor for the early morning trapshoot. 25 total operators, presenters and exhibitors participated in this fun event. Once again, thank you, Bill, for being a sponsor!

Jack Daniel, the Administrator for the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Drinking Water and Environmental Health, kicked off the training sessions Wednesday afternoon with the Regulatory Update. During his address to the crowd, Jack also announced his retirement from the department. Jack has been an advocate for the small systems across the great state of Nebraska for several years and will be greatly missed. Though he will now have the time do some of the other things he loves to do such as hunting and bee-keeping. Best of luck, Mr. Daniel!

A panel discussion was then held regarding the Pilger, Nebraska tornado and how your emergency response plan can change in a matter of minutes. The result of this tornado may be that we will change the way we look at our emergency plans. We will have a much more in depth look at the Pilger tornado at our Annual Conference in March including a panel discussion with several first responders.

Bill Podraza with Miller and Associates brought the day of learning to an end with a fantastic session about handling stress in the workplace. This is a very important topic at workplaces

everywhere and Bill's energy during this presentation kept everyone's attention until the end. Thanks again, Bill.

At the conclusion of the training sessions, HD Supply sponsored a social hour on Wednesday evening. This gave operators and exhibitors a little time to relax and interact with conference attendees.

Wednesday night's banquet was highlighted by the operator of the year award. This year's recipient was Mike Kesselring. Mike is the operator for Dawes Country Rural Water #1 and the Village of Whitney. Congratulations, Mike!

Thursday began with a delicious breakfast and a full day of learning. Operators had several sessions to choose from throughout the day. By Thursday afternoon, when the dust had settled, operators had been given an opportunity to earn 15 water hours, 12.5 wastewater hours, 10.5 well driller hours and 5 backflow hours during the conference. These totals include the Pre-conference.

Thank you all for coming and supporting the Nebraska Rural Water Association once again this year! This is a really fun conference. Also, we will be setting the 2015 date for the Fall Conference in Gering soon. See you all next year!