

## TRAINING X TWO!!

By Pat Petersen, Training and Technical Assistance Specialist

As many of you operators may know, our jobs at the Nebraska Rural Water Association are based on year by year contracts. My position as the Training and Technical Assistance Specialist is funded through an EPA grant which is applied for by National Rural Water. This year the awarding of these grants was delayed due to the government shutdown so I was left without a contract for six months. Lucky for me the contract came through on June 1.

Oh, did I mention there was a second part to this new contract? The words Wastewater/Training and Technical Assistance appeared before my eyes. Funny as it may seem, during my six months without a contract, our Wastewater Technician, Mike Lucas, told me if I needed anything to do, he might have ONE or TWO things I could help him with. For those of you who know Mike, he has no problem staying busy with sewer camera work, smoking sewers, 24 hour composite sampling and certification courses, to name a few. Being a water and wastewater operator (as most of you are) for over 21 years, I was able to help Mike out with these things, and felt very confident and excited about my new contract that also included the Training and Technical Assistance on the wastewater side of things!

The training that most of you receive for your water CEU's will remain very similar as in the past, but my wastewater training will focus on EUM, or "Effective Utility Management." I am required to hold three, 6 hour sessions with a strict agenda on how to effectively manage your utility. The beauty of this training is that it pertains to all decision makers of a publicly-owned utility. Not only will operators benefit from these sessions, but it is designed more for clerks, board members and administrators. Six hours may seem like a long day of learning, but the sessions include several chances to speak with other utility operators about certain areas of utility management through group exercises that are conducted to help bring other ideas to light which one may not have thought about with their own utility. I have conducted one of these workshops and had 31 attendees. Some of the comments on the evaluations included: "This is the best training class I have ever been to!" and "The group exercises help all of us within the group rate our strengths and weaknesses."

There are ten major areas that are considered during these workshops. They are all identified but we will try to find at least three that will fit our group and focus on them. The ten areas include: Product Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Employee & Leadership Development, Operational Optimization, Financial Viability, Infrastructure Stability, Operational Resiliency, Community Sustainability & Economic Development, Water Resource Adequacy and Stakeholder Understanding and Support. Each person that attends this class will receive the "Rural and Small Systems Guidebook to Sustainable Utility Management." This guidebook is used in the class as a workbook and can also be used to measure the continued sustainability of a utility.

Katie Miller and Jerry Blain with Burns and McDonnell were the presenters at the first EUM training session. They did a fantastic job covering all of the different aspects which these sessions include. The attendees' evaluations of this class, also, shared the same view. So, Katie and Jerry, I thank you.

So with all of that being said, I need to finish up this article so I can get the next date set for the 2<sup>nd</sup> of three EUM training sessions. At this point, it looks as though the session will be held in Aurora, Nebraska sometime in early December. Keep your eyes peeled for your mailer and be sure to pass on the information to anyone involved with your utility that you feel would benefit from such a course!