CLOROX; IS IT SAFE FOR DRINKING WATER

By Russ Topp, Circuit Rider

As most everyone knows, Nebraska is not a mandatory disinfection state. Most of the public water systems across the state do not use chlorine disinfection on a regular basis. Most every water operator also knows what can happen if they fail a routine monthly coliform test, panic sets in.

Most often after a coliform violation we get asked, "Now what do I need to do?" Usually there are a couple of things you may want to do. One is to disinfect the system using chlorine. You can purchase chlorine from several reputable vendors across the state. Most of the commercial vendors carry 12% chlorine and you may be able to buy as little as a 5 gallon pail but usually it comes in 15 gallon carboys or more. The only problem with purchasing this amount is you may not need this much, then what to do you do with what's left over? Another source is to use Clorox. The main advantage of using Clorox for emergency disinfection is the fact that almost all grocery stores carry the product. Regular Clorox bleach is NSF (National Sanitation Foundation) approved. Clorox has evolved over the years from 5.25% to 6% and most recently 8.25%. When purchasing Clorox bleach it is very important to only purchase "Regular Clorox." This means no additives like spring fresh, lemon fresh or splash free, etc. The Clorox with additives is not NSF approved and should not be used in your drinking water supply.

The second thing water systems can do to help clean up the system is to flush. Flushing sounds easy enough but there are a couple things to take into consideration. If it's winter, flushing can be an icing hazard. Also, all dead ends need to be flushed. Flushing can also really stir up your distribution system. Just ask any operator with high iron and manganese concentration in their water. Stirring up the system may cause more bacteria problems by stripping bio film loose from the inside walls of the water main. If this happens you may have more problems with bacteria the following month. That's why my usual recommendation is to use both methods if practical. Start the chlorinator and then flush. This will disperse the chlorine quickly and move chlorinated water into the problem dead ends.

As always, if you run into a problem don't hesitate to give us a call.