

Issue 3/2017

# Nebraska Rural Water Association



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# Nebraska Good Water News

# Issue 3/2017

*“Keeping Our Water Safe”*

*Board of Directors*

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### **On the cover:**

The Uehling Water Tower.

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*The NEBRASKA RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION is dedicated to the improvement and assistance of all public water systems in the State of Nebraska.*

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# 2017 TRAINING

## Grade 6 Backflow Prevention Cross-Connection Control Course - 5 Day

October 16-20                  Wahoo

## Wastewater Certification Course

August 15-18	Wahoo - Mechanical
October 10-13	Wahoo - Mechanical
November 28-29	Wahoo- Lagoon

## Wastewater Training

August 3	Hastings
August 24	Albion (SUMW)
September 7	Wahoo
October 5	Atkinson
November 2	Omaha
December 7	Burwell

## Water Operator Training

August 8	Atkinson
August 10	Loup City
October 17	McCook
October 18	Axtell
November 15	Mullen
December 5	Auburn
December 20	Wahoo

## Backflow Continuing Education Training

September 26	Giltner
September 27	Ord
October 24	South Sioux City
October 25	O'Neill
November 7	Wahoo
December 5	Mitchell
December 6	Ogallala
December 7	Cambridge
December 13	Wahoo

**August 23**—Trenching & Shoring, Wahoo

**August 24**—Confined Space Entry, Wahoo

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## EPA Nutrient Survey

By Mike Lucas, Wastewater Technician

It is expected that the EPA nutrient removal survey will be arriving at your POTW (Publicly-Owned Treatment Works) at the end of 2017. **All facilities that receive this questionnaire must respond within 30 days of receipt under penalty of law.** EPA's Office of Water and Office of Science and Technology, will administer the questionnaire as a census to all known POTW's in the United States that discharge wastewater. This is in response to concern over increasing levels of nitrogen and phosphorous (a.k.a. nutrient) pollution entering the nation's waters. Nutrient pollution is thought to result in harmful algal blooms which release cyanotoxins. As part of this study, EPA will share statistically representative data on the profile and performance of POTW's across the country.

The survey consists of 24 questions to collect information on POTW identification, outfall identification and POTW operations and treatment characteristics. Respondents will be required to complete and submit an electronic version of the questionnaire. However, EPA also recognizes there may be cases where POTW's may lack electronic access and require a format that can be mailed to EPA. Most POTW's will most likely need to complete the entire survey. EPA anticipates that it will take 3 ½ hours to complete.

EPA is not requiring you to perform non-routine tests or measurements solely for the purpose of responding to the questionnaire. In the event exact data or information is not available, you are allowed to use your best professional judgement.

Some of the types of data that you will need to complete on the survey are as follows: a Certifying Official's signature; your NPDES ID and population served; your design capacity flow, both daily and peak in MGD; your average flow, both daily and peak; percentage of contribution by Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Septage and other to your waste stream; estimates of your inflow and infiltration quantities in GPD or MGD; your type of treatment; latitude and longitude of your outfall; total volume discharged in 2016; and nutrients that you monitor and their concentration ranges, etc.

As you can imagine, discussion of this survey resulted in extensive conversation with EPA representatives at our

National Conference in June. Our assignment was to be prepared to assist POTW's with completion of the required questionnaire. In that effort, you can expect presentations at NeRWA Wastewater Operator training classes and I will also be available to assist system operators individually as needed.



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## Dealing with Boards/Councils

*By Mike Stanzel, Circuit Rider*

As I am close to heading into my 9<sup>th</sup> year with NeRWA I am trying to estimate the number of “Onsite” visits I have performed over the years. If I average 20-25 systems per month, I am going to guess 2300-2400 visits to numerous public water systems providing assistance with everything from chlorination to paperwork to leak detection to line locating. Some systems I help on a regular basis, and some systems I may have helped only once or twice. Needless to say, I have created many good, positive working relationships, as well as, many friends.

One thing that bothers me and has happened too many times to count, is that I will show up to visit a town and my friend/coworker has parted ways with the city or village. I will always ask the clerk or new maintenance person where the previous operator went and I get a lot of the same answers. Granted a few were dismissed for good reasons, others found higher paying wages or moved from the area, but a most recent and common answer is they cannot seem to find balance in dealing/working with mayors or board members. A lot of operators find that the NeRWA staff is easy to talk to, to ask for advice and to ask about what we see happening every day in other towns. We as a staff have talked quite a bit about what we can do to help out more in this particular area of dealing with boards/councils.

Those of you that were at our spring conference may have noticed a survey sheet at our booth that asked operators to complete information at their own discretion regarding what their wages are, duties, benefits, years on the job, license info etc. We are trying to collect all this information so we can provide it to town boards so they can make sure that you are being compensated fairly compared to the town down the road.

We can also do rate studies with your board so they can see if your water system operates at a profit or loss.

Having served on my town board for the past 6.5 years I can see things from both sides of the spectrum and would be more than happy to sit down and visit with new or experienced board members.

Being on a town board can be a thankless job to say the least especially when you are new to the board. There is so

much to learn about when it comes to budgets and setting your mill levy not to mention the various departments within your city such as water, sewer, streets, parks, police, cemetery, just to name a few.

Most boards are a volunteer position. Some council members are paid a small stipend and I am pretty sure NO ONE is an expert on all aspects of the city. For example of our 4 council people, I have water/wastewater background, one is in banking, one in security and one in hotel reservations, yet we all bring a unique perspective to the table when making decisions.

A good idea, especially when new people get elected is to invite them to come spend some time with you. Show them what you do every day. Take them to the wells, lagoons and lift stations. Show them the water tower. Show them your snow removal equipment, back hoes, loaders. Show them anything and everything you own, especially if things are in need of repair and replacement. They will have a much better understanding of your duties and tools if they see things firsthand for themselves.

The city employees are the most valuable asset a city has. They are the ones who have earned the licenses, been to the recertification classes, attended the clerks’ conferences, worked in the trenches, poured the concrete, pushed the snow etc. So my advice is to try and keep up good communication and a good relationship with your board and please let us know if we can help in any way.



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# TENTATIVE FALL CONFERENCE AGENDA

## Tuesday, September 12 PRE-CONFERENCE

8:00-9:00	Directional Flushing of Your Water: Rich Koenig, DHHS	1W
9:00-10:00	To Be Announced	
10:00-10:15	Break	
10:15-11:15	To Be Announced	
11:15-12:15	Operator Review & Quiz: Field Reps, NDHHS	1W
12:15-12:45	Lunch	
12:45-1:45	Operator Review & Quiz: Field Reps, NDHHS	1W
2:30	Golf	

## Wednesday, September 13

8:30	Trap Shoot	
8:30	Poker Run	
10:00-12:30	Conference Registration	
12:30-2:00	Regulatory Update: Howard Isaacs, NDHHS	1.5W,1.5WD
2:00-2:15	Break: Tour Exhibits and Drawings for Prizes	
2:15-3:15	Motivation: What Makes People Do What They Do? Bill Podraza, Miller & Associates	1W,1WW
3:15-3:30	Break: Tour Exhibits and Drawings for Prizes	
3:30-5:00	Planning for Change? OR Change in Planning? Rich Koenig, NDHHS	1.5W,1.5WW,1.5WD
5:00-6:00	Social in Exhibit Area	
6:00-7:00	Banquet and Awards	

## Thursday, September 14

6:30-7:30	BREAKFAST	
7:00-8:30	Conference Registration	
7:30-8:30	A—Working with Millennials: Bill Podraza, Miller & Associates B—Operator Round Table: NeRWA Staff & Board C—Backflow Forum: Rich Koenig, NDHHS	1W, WW 1W,1WW 1W,1BF,1WW
8:30-8:45	Break: Tour Exhibits and Drawings for Prizes	
8:45-9:45	A—Trenchless Sewer Rehab Methods: Brett Melson, Johnson Service B—Recordkeeping Requirements: Doug Woodbeck, NDHHS C—Backflow Incidents & Emergency Planning: Rich Koenig, NDHHS	1WW 1W 1W,1BF,1WW
9:45-10:00	Break: Tour Exhibits and Drawings for Prizes	
10:00-11:00	A—Sewer Inspection & Maintenance: Brett Melson, Johnson Service B—Nitrates/SOCs: Beth Ramsey/Becky Schuerman, NDHHS C—The Good, Bad, and Ugly Installations: Rich Koenig, NDHHS	1WW 1W 1W,1BF,1WW
11:00-11:15	Break: Tour Exhibits	
11:15-12:15	A—Diving Through A Water Tank Inspection: Roger King, Midco B—Field Rep Q&A: Andy Kahle/Area Reps, NDHHS C—Elements of a Cross-Connection Control Program: Barney Whatley, NeRWA	1W 1W 1W, 1BF, 1WW
12:15-1:15	Lunch	
1:15-2:15	A—Water Treatment Processes & Purposes: Ron Rappard, Layne Christensen B—Drought & Your Water System: Scott Sprague, NDHHS C—Backflow Knowledge: Rich Koenig, NDHHS	1W 1W 1W,1BF,1WW
2:15-2:30	Break	
2:30-3:30	A—Institutional Knowledge: Mike Wentink, NDHHS	1W



## Conference Activities

The golf tournament is Tuesday, September 12, at 2:30 pm at the Riverview Country Club (100928 County Rd 18, Scottsbluff). Bring your own clubs. Golf carts are available.

The trap shoot is Wednesday, September 13, at 8:30 am at the Mitchell Valley Trap Club (3.25 miles south of Mitchell). Bring your own gun and shells.

The Poker run is Wednesday, September 13, at 8:30 am. Meet in front of the Gering Civic Center.

You can call the office if you are interested in any of these fun events or check them on the registration form.

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# Nebraska Rural Water Association

## EARLY REGISTRATION

Western Nebraska Fall Pre-Conference and Conference  
 September 12-14, 2017  
 Gering Civic Center  
 1050 "M" Street  
 Gering, Nebraska

*One name per form. Make sure to indicate all your licenses to insure proper credit hours:*

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Certificate numbers: Water # \_\_\_\_\_ Grade 6# \_\_\_\_\_ WW # \_\_\_\_\_ Well Driller \_\_\_\_\_  
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DAYS ATTENDING	MEMBER	NON-MEMBER
FULL CONFERENCE WITH PRECONFERENCE— (all meals included)	_____ \$180.00	_____ \$210.00
FULL CONFERENCE (WED & THURS) (all meals included)	_____ \$125.00	_____ \$150.00
PRECONFERENCE (TUES) (includes lunch)	_____ \$90.00	_____ \$115.00
WEDNESDAY ONLY (includes Banquet)	_____ \$85.00	_____ \$110.00
THURSDAY ONLY (includes breakfast buffet and lunch)	_____ \$90.00	_____ \$115.00
GUEST BANQUET TICKETS— \$25 x _____	TOTAL \$ _____	TOTAL \$ _____
GUEST LUNCH TICKETS—\$20 x _____	TOTAL \$ _____	TOTAL \$ _____
GOLF TOURNAMENT ON TUESDAY AFTERNOON _____ YES		
TRAP SHOOT ON WEDNESDAY MORNING _____ YES		
POKER RUN ON WEDNESDAY MORNING _____ YES		

Meals are included with the conference registration. Extra meal tickets are available above.  
 The venue needs a count for the evening meal. Please indicate if you will staying for the Wed evening meal: Yes \_\_\_\_\_

<p><b>EARLY REGISTRATION ENDS                  AUGUST 25.                  FEE INCREASES \$25 FOR                  REGISTRATIONS DATED OR                  POSTMARKED BETWEEN                  AUGUST 26 AND SEPT 6.                  NO REGISTRATIONS AFTER SEPT 6.                  \$50 increase at the door.</b></p>	<p>TOTAL DUE \$ _____                  Late charge, if any \$ _____                  Total \$ _____</p> <p>BILL ME _____                  PO# _____                  CHECK ENCLOSED _____                  (Note: Certificates will not be mailed until payment is received in NeRWA office.)</p>
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To Register (no phone registrations):  
 Fax: 402-443-5274  
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## The Education Continues

*By Ken Halvorsen, Source Water Specialist*

I recently experienced my first in-service training. It was quite educational. Having it in New Orleans with people from all over the U.S. added to the process. I probably learned more just visiting with people that are doing the same job from states around the country.

It seems everyone has their own source water protection issues. Texas, Oklahoma and North Dakota are having issues with the oil fracking process. Wastewater used in that process is finding its way into the potable water wells and contaminating them. They were told the solution was to dig new wells.

States to the east that have a lot of surface water systems are having to deal with “accidental discharges” of contaminants into the rivers these systems use for their water source. It would be a lot easier to deal with this if they knew it was coming.

During discussions with surface water systems I should have known but had not thought about their regulations. Some allow boating, fishing but no swimming. Apparently humans are more toxic than all the birds, fish and other animals that live in and around the water. The gas and oil that is discharged from boats is not considered a problem. I do understand the mental thing about having people swimming in my drinking water.

Of course, Nebraska is not without its own issues. Increasing nitrate levels in wells is our biggest problem. Numerous

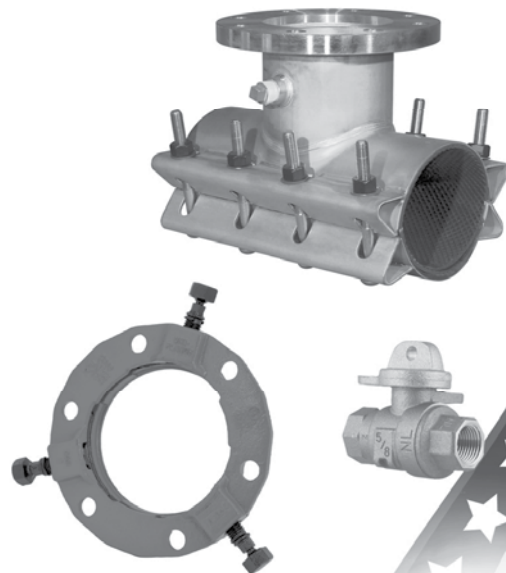
wells have already been lost due to unacceptable levels. Others are getting close. Hopefully with preventive and corrective measures the trend will reverse. If your nitrate levels are trending higher, contact us to see what help we can provide you.

I also survived my first presentation to a group of water operators from the Chadron area. I must have done okay, nobody got up and left, unless they were all bored and sleeping!!

If you are interested in a source water protection plan or have any questions, you can call me at 402-607-9750.

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# TOO ROCK FOR COUNTRY, TOO COUNTRY FOR ROCK AND ROLL

Many of you know Gil Frey. He was NeRWA's Wastewater Tech for many years. It seems that Gil has a new past time these days. "Too rock for country, too country for rock and roll." For Gil "Gilly" Frey, an alteration to the Lonnie Mack song is the best introduction to him and his family's band, Gilly and the Kid. The Cedar Bluffs band has been touring the county and beyond, playing at community celebrations, street dances and jam sessions. "If everything works out, we will only have one weekend off," Gilly said about their summer schedule.



Gilly is the band's rhythm guitar player and vocalist. His 21-year-old grandson, Michael Leffler is the band's lead guitarist and a vocalist. Grandson Zach Leffler, 18, is the bass guitarist; grandson Jacob Leffler, 15, plays keyboard, guitar or drums; and brother Curt Frey plays drums at the gigs he can make. He lives in Emerson. Gilly admires his grandsons and what he considers their bred-in, natural talent. "They're all self-taught," he said. Michael's talent on the lead guitar is incredible, Zach is a very proficient bass player and Jacob plays whatever you want him to, he said.

The sound is a mixture between old country, rock and roll and blues. The songs are covers of old-time favorites. The band has a set list, but Michael is good at fulfilling crowd requests. "I don't even know all the songs he knows," Gilly said. "He surprises me." Michael's preference is rock n' roll, anywhere from 1955 to 1993. He started out playing old country, but his preference shifted. "I watched the movie School of Rock and started loving rock n' roll," he said.

While the band officially formed in 2014, the grand idea had been forming since about 2008, when Gilly bought Michael his first electric guitar at 12 years old. "I go to the basement and he's playing Lynyrd Skynyrd," Gilly recalls. Baffled at what he was hearing, he asked his grandson if he was really playing the song that well. "I told him I can't play it that well," he said. "So, I said to him, 'you're in the band.' And he has been ever since."

Gilly and Michael began playing gigs at a former bar in Cedar Bluffs and other gigs here and there they could schedule. The band has now played 49 gigs since 2014. But Gilly is a veteran performer. He started playing with The Dill Pickles and also played with the Mavericks, a band from the Valparaiso and Touhy area.

Gilly's first guitar was a Silverton acoustic guitar that he purchased in 1962. He sold his BB gun and had a little help from his parents, who told him they'd get him the guitar if he wouldn't bother them later for a car. He still has the guitar, and does not plan on ever parting with it. Gilly said playing is a way to clear his mind and is a stress relief. "It doesn't make any difference how many people are in the crowd, as long as people are clapping and having fun," he said.

Gilly is reaching his 1,000<sup>th</sup> gig. He's excited for many more, even after he's gone. "If my guitar and hat are on a stand up there, I'll be on stage," he added.



# The Importance of Computers

By Barney Whatley, Capacity Development Specialist

Yosemite Sam would often state with a vengeance “I hates rabbits”. That is exactly how I feel about computers about 90% of the time. If you don’t believe me, just ask anyone else who works for NeRWA. Worse yet, the feeling seems to be mutual and computers seem to do their very best to harass me. I know many of you will say that computers are just machines and are only doing what the operator tells them, but I disagree. I believe we have reached a point where computers are living things with feelings, especially the feeling of hate towards me. With this being said, computers are still very important these days and can be very useful tools for those who do not make them angry.

I have been working for NeRWA for over 18 years now, and I have tried to save every document, emergency plan, O & M manual, etc. that I have completed over the years. I have also tried to save the documents of others who have worked here and left, in case they ever need to be updated for a system. When I complete something for a system, I usually try to copy it to a thumb drive and save it on the system computer, if there is one. If this gets done, when it is time to update the file for the state, it can be done at the system without someone from NeRWA having to come reproduce it.

Many operators do not want anything to do with computers, and there are still numerous clerks who feel the same way. If the system has a permitted wastewater treatment plant, they are now required to submit their Discharge Monitoring Reports (DMRs) on line. Since someone with the system will need to have access to a computer to do this, there should be some file folders set up for the other required reports the system needs to submit. It is much easier to call up an old report and make necessary changes so it represents the current situation than it is to re-write the entire report.

A part of Capacity Development is to help a system become self-sufficient in operating as a business, and this includes paperwork as well as management and finances. Keeping copies of routine reports and records that need to be submitted to state agencies will greatly assist a system to become self-sufficient in this area. Also, many of the required forms are available on the state drinking water website and can be downloaded to the system computer and filled out and saved, or NeRWA can send templates for

some of the items the state wants a system to have on file.


Overall, computers are very helpful in completing paperwork and maintaining records for water and wastewater systems. Just be careful to treat your computer with a little respect so it does not decide to hate you and do everything possible to make your life miserable. Now that I have finished typing this, I will see if I can save it where I can find it or if my computer is going to hide it and make me go look for it!


By the way, I really do hates computers most of the time.

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## The Other Classes

*By Pat Petersen, Training Specialist*

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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.....

# SEVERE WEATHER SAFETY GUIDELINES

*From the National Weather Service*

The good news is that you can survive a tornado! Even on the western fringe of tornado alley, chances are you will never experience a direct hit by a tornado. However, being prepared is critical. By following these simple guidelines, you can protect yourself and your family from nature's most violent storm.

No matter where you are, use these basic guidelines for tornado safety. Refer to other sections of this guide for more details on staying safe in specific locations and circumstances.

The most important things to remember are:

- **GET IN** - If you are outside, get inside. If you're already inside, get as far into the middle of the building as possible.
- **GET DOWN** - Get underground if possible. If you cannot, go to the lowest floor possible.
- **COVER UP** - Flying and falling debris are a storm's number one killer. Use pillows, blankets, coats, helmets, etc to cover up and protect your head and body from flying debris.

## HOME

Again, the key to tornado survival is a safety plan. Your plan at home should be known by everyone in the home and practiced at least twice each year. Children who may be at home alone should know what to do and where to go even if no adults are there.

Your selection of a tornado shelter in your home will depend on many factors. Use the basic guidelines and the information below to find your tornado safety area. When selecting your shelter area, remember that your goals should be:

Get as low as possible - completely underground is best.

Put as many barriers between you and the outside as possible.

It is not the wind inside and around a tornado that kills and injures people - it's the flying debris that's in the

*continued on next page*

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wind. Items can fly through the air (broken glass, etc) or fall down (could range from small objects to objects the size and weight of cars)

### Storm Cellars and Basements

Being completely underground is the best place to be in a tornado. If you have an underground storm cellar, use it. Make sure the door is securely fastened.

If the entrance to your storm cellar is outside, you should allow plenty of time to get to the shelter before the storm arrives. If you wait until the storm is upon you, you may be exposed to wind, hail, rain, lightning and maybe even flying debris as you go to the cellar.

A basement is also a good shelter in most cases. If your basement is not totally underground, or has outside doors or windows, stay as far away from them as possible. Items from above could fall into the basement, so it's a good idea to get under a stairwell or a piece of sturdy furniture. If possible, avoid seeking shelter underneath heavy objects on the floor above. Use coverings (pillows, blankets, sleeping bags, coats, etc) and helmets to shield your head and body and to protect yourself from flying debris.

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### Safe Rooms

A reinforced safe room (or above-ground tornado shelter) is as good as an underground shelter in most situations. Safe rooms are specially-designed reinforced tornado shelters built into homes, schools and other buildings. The Federal Emergency Management Agency, in close cooperation with experts in wind engineering and tornado damage, has developed detailed guidelines for constructing a safe room. For more, go to the FEMA Saferoom webpage.

### If No Underground or Reinforced Shelter is Available

If you're like most people, you don't have an underground shelter. In this case, you need to find a location that is:

- As close to the ground as possible
- As far inside the building as possible
- Away from doors, windows and outside walls
- In as small a room as possible

If you don't have a safe room, basement or underground storm shelter, what should you do? Remembering the basics of tornado safety, you should look around your home to determine the best place.

Here are Some Ideas

### Bathrooms

Bathrooms MAY be a good shelter, provided they are not along an outside wall and have no windows. Contrary to popular belief, there is nothing magically safe about getting in a bathtub with a mattress. In some cases, this might be a great shelter. However, it depends on where your bathroom is. If your bathroom has windows and is along an outside wall, it's probably not the best shelter.

Bathrooms have proven to be adequate tornado shelters in many cases for a couple of reasons. First, bathrooms are typically small rooms with no windows in the middle of a building. Secondly, it is thought that the plumbing within the walls of a bathroom helps to add some structural strength to the room.

However, with tornadoes there are no absolutes, and you should look closely at your home when determining your shelter area.

*continued on next page*



## Closets

A small interior closet might be a shelter. Again, the closet should be as deep inside the building as possible, with no outside walls, doors or windows. Be sure to close the door and cover up.

## Hallways

If a hallway is your shelter area, be sure to shut all doors. Again, the goal is to create as many barriers as possible between you and the flying debris in and near a tornado. To be an effective shelter, a hallway should be as far inside the building as possible and should not have any openings to the outside (windows and doors).

## Under Stairs

The space underneath a stairwell could be used as a shelter.

Generally speaking, you should not leave your home in your vehicle when a tornado threatens. In most cases, you will have a better chance of surviving by staying put in your home. Every home is different - there is no absolute safe place in every home. Use the guidelines. Unless you are deep underground, there is no such thing as a 100% tornado-proof shelter. Freak accidents can happen.

## APARTMENTS

The basic tornado safety guidelines apply if you live in an apartment. Get to the lowest floor, with as many walls between you and the outside as possible.

Apartment dwellers should have a plan, particularly if you live on the upper floors. If your complex does not have a reinforced shelter, you should make arrangements to get to an apartment on the lowest floor possible.

In some cases, the apartment clubhouse or laundry room may be used as a shelter, provided the basic safety guidelines are followed. You need to have a shelter area that's accessible at all times of the day or night.

## MOBILE HOMES

Even an EF-1 tornado, typically considered a "weak tornado", will most likely severely damage a mobile home and/or roll it over. This is why tornado safety plans are so crucial for residents of mobile homes!

Mobile homes are especially susceptible to high winds from severe thunderstorms and tornadoes. You will likely not be safe in a mobile home, whether you're in a hallway, a closet or a bathroom. Mobile homes cannot stand up to even a weak tornado, and you should make plans BEFORE the storm arrives to get to a safe shelter. Due to the potentially short amount of time between a warning and the arrival of a tornado, people should consider executing their safety plans when a tornado watch is issued - do not wait for the tornado warning!

Taking cover under sturdy furniture, in a bathtub or closet or under a mattress will be meaningless in a mobile home if the home itself is destroyed, blown over, or rolled over by tornado or severe thunderstorm winds. Get out of mobile homes and find a more substantial shelter as quickly as possible.

Again, you need to have access to a shelter that is available at any time of the day or night.

## PUBLIC

A detailed home tornado safety plan won't help you

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much if you're away from home when the tornado threatens. You need to think about what you will do if a tornado threatens you while you're away from home - at work, church, school, while shopping, dining out, on vacation, or participating in outdoor activities.

Danger is higher when you're away from home, when you may be unfamiliar with the area and away from your usual sources of weather information. It is important for business owners, and those responsible for safety in all types of public buildings and venues to think about and plan for tornado safety for all employees, occupants and potential visitors.

There is a myth that tornadoes don't hit urban areas, but this is UNTRUE! Even if you are away from home in a large city, you should stay alert when severe weather threatens. More information can be found at the bottom of this page.

### Hotels and Motels

Think about tornado safety in hotels, motels. Some lodging establishments have safety plans for guests, but others may not, and you may be on your own. Some establishments suggest guests seek shelter in hallways. However, you should remember to

avoid open hallways - hallways that have doors and/or windows on either end. These can become wind tunnels and send debris flying down the corridor. Interior bathrooms and closets near the center of the building may be good shelters in this situation. Again, wherever you are forced to seek shelter in a tornado, cover up with pillows, heavy blankets or whatever you can find.

### Public Buildings - Malls, Stores, Restaurants, and Hospitals

The same basic tornado safety guidelines apply in any public building, whether it's your local shopping mall, a hospital or nursing home, a grocery or discount store, a church, a hotel, convenience store, truck stop, or restaurant.

- GET IN - put as many walls between you and the outside as possible
- GET DOWN - if you can't get underground, get as low as possible
- COVER UP - use whatever you have to protect your head and body from flying missiles

If a tornado threatens, you should not leave in your car! Being in a sturdy building is most likely safer than being in your vehicle on the road if a tornado hits. Stay calm and cool and try to find a safe shelter wherever you are.

### Outdoor Activities - Campgrounds, RV Parks, Sporting Events, Fairs, and Festivals

Being exposed outdoors is one of the worst places to be in a tornado or severe thunderstorm. Being involved in outdoor activities can sometimes put you at increased risk, because you're exposed outdoors and possibly in an unfamiliar area.

Organized outdoor events, including sporting events at all times of year, should have weather safety plans. People at large sporting events are especially vulnerable because of the difficulties involved in moving large numbers of people. Event coordinators or managers should have a detailed severe weather safety plan in place and practice it. People at large outdoor gatherings or events should listen when severe weather information is conveyed and follow instructions if a safety plan is put into action.

### Tornadoes Can and DO Hit Urban Areas

Contrary to what some people may think, tornadoes



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contain other deadly and destructive elements that can threaten your life in your car:

**Hail**

Severe thunderstorms can produce hail as big as baseballs or softballs. These chunks of ice, falling at over 100 mph from a severe thunderstorm, will break car windshields and dent vehicles bodies. Get off the roadway, if possible, and find shelter underneath an awning, a carwash or other structure. Abandon your vehicle, if possible, and get into a sturdy structure. Do not park underneath highway overpasses or bridges. You could cause a deadly traffic jam, preventing others from reaching safe shelter and blocking emergency vehicles.

**Wind**

Severe thunderstorms can produce devastating straight line winds, as strong, or even stronger than most tornadoes. Any vehicle may be overturned by severe thunderstorm winds. Get off the road, if possible, and find a sturdy building to take shelter in.

**Heavy Rain & Flooding**

Even non-severe thunderstorms can produce excessive rainfall in a very short period of time that can flood roadways and low water crossings. Avoid areas where water is covering the roads - even familiar ones.

Every situation is different, and if faced with a tornado threat while on the road, your best course of action will depend on your exact location, the tornado's location, speed, and direction of movement, road options available to you, nearby structures, time of day, traffic, weather conditions you're experiencing.

If the tornado is far enough away and road options and traffic allow, you should try to find a substantial building

for shelter. Follow the basic tornado safety guidelines (get in - get down - cover up). Motorists have found truck stops, convenience stores, restaurants and other businesses to be adequate shelters in a tornado situation. Walk-in coolers can sometimes make a good shelter.

While you should never try to outrun a tornado in your vehicle, you may, in some situations, be able to get out of the tornado's way by driving out of its path, or simply stopping and allowing the tornado to pass. Again, this can be extremely dangerous unless traffic, time of day and road options allow you to see the tornado, determine which way it's moving (and how fast), find a road option that will take you out of its path (while avoiding other storms) and to safe shelter.

The worst-case scenario for motorists would be to be trapped in your vehicle on the road with no escape possible. This scenario could occur in more densely populated areas, in metropolitan areas at rush-hour or in high traffic situations, or on limited access roadways, such as interstates or turnpikes, where it might not be possible to quickly exit and find safe shelter. It is in these situations when it may become necessary to leave your vehicle and seek shelter in a ditch, culvert or low spot.

Highway overpasses are NOT tornado shelters, and these should be avoided.

**Taking Shelter Outdoors**

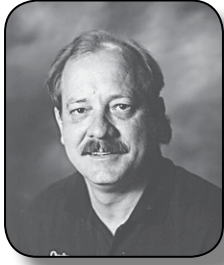
Ditches, culverts, and ravines should be used only as an absolute last resort. You will be exposed to flying debris, rain and hail, lightning and extreme wind. People have survived by seeking shelter in ditches, but people have also died. If you must leave your vehicle to seek shelter in a ditch, you should try to get as far away from the vehicle, as well as any other potential "missiles" as possible.

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# Reserves

*By Randy Hellbusch, Circuit Rider*

NeRWA has assisted small water systems with over 1,000 rates studies in my time with the association. Many times when we are called to assist it is either that the system is contemplating a major project or upgrade to the system and is interested in knowing what the payback is going to be on any potential new debt or that the system is just to the point where they have to do something due to several years of running in the red. The latter, unfortunately, occurs too often. Many boards are reluctant to raise rates and understandably so. It is not a very popular thing to do politically. So, many times when a rate hike is inevitable, the rate increase is only sufficient enough to cover the losses that have occurred and no thought is given to any type of reserve fund.

In the big scheme of things, reserve funds are an essential aspect to running a viable utility. There are several types of reserve funds that any water system should strongly consider according to the Utility Management Guide of NRWA. Below are examples of a couple funds that I would suggest to all water and wastewater systems.

**DEBT SERVICE RESERVE:** Debt service reserves are often established by the lender and are often 10% of the annual debt service payment. These reserves are usually collected until it equals one year of debt service. This is a good practice, whether mandated by the lender or not.

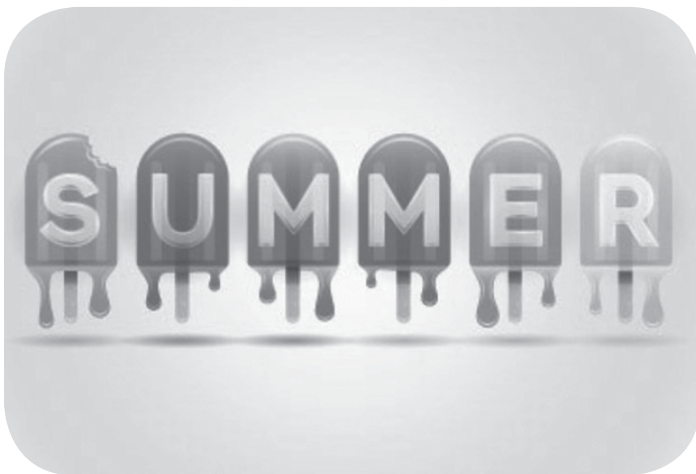
**REPAIR AND REPLACEMENT RESERVE or OPERATING RESERVE:** Repair and Replacement reserves should be between 3 and 5% of revenues for general repairs and maintenance. A good rule of thumb for R&R reserves for small water and wastewater systems is that the total in the reserve account plus revenues should equal an Operating Ratio of 1.35 or higher. Below is a simple calculation to illustrate.

$$\text{Operating Ratio} = \frac{\text{Total Operating Income} + \text{Operating Reserves}}{\text{Total Operating Costs}^*}$$

\* Not including debt or debt related costs

Water and wastewater utilities' operating costs vary widely from year to year. The basic notion of an R&R reserve is to cover those years when costs run high without having to constantly adjust rates or take drastic budget cutting measures.

If more small utilities implemented reserve policies such as these, it could often eliminate the need for huge rate hikes and help the utility avoid RATE SHOCK. It would show that the utility is being well managed and that can often be a huge step in positive public relations.





## ***NRWA Praises House of Representatives' Proposal to Extend Drinking Water Service to Rural Communities***

(Washington, DC) The **National Rural Water Association** (NRWA), the largest community-based water utility organization in the country, is praising a new provision in the House Appropriations Committee Fiscal Year 2018 Agriculture Appropriations Bill. The committee passed the bill on July 12, 2017 and included a provision supported by NRWA to help rural communities struggling with their water infrastructure through development of regional partnerships with their neighboring communities who may have more resources.

The committee's "***Unserved and Underserved Rural Communities***," provision states, *"The Committee recognizes there are unserved or underserved rural areas within the U.S. that lack the technical, financial, or managerial capacity to adequately operate, maintain or provide safe and affordable water and wastewater service necessary to protect and enhance the public health and economic vitality of their communities. It is noted that many contiguous and local utilities located outside the unserved or underserved service area have the capacity to provide sustainable, essential water and wastewater services to these areas. The Committee directs the Secretary to explore the potential of providing financial and other incentives to the local or contiguous utilities that have the demonstrated capacity and ability to provide essential water and waste water services to these unserved or underserved communities. The Secretary shall provide a report to the Committees on Appropriations of the House and Senate with findings and recommendations within 180 days of enactment of this Act."*

NRWA initiated a new effort to assist rural communities with regional solutions three years ago and has been convening an annual "Rural Water District Policy Conference" each year in Washington, DC. NRWA's Director of Legislative Affairs, Bill Simpson, said, *"Our investment and innovation in advancing regional rural water solutions has paid off with this new emphasis and attention in Congress. NRWA has been leading the effort to advance workable regional water solutions thanks to the participation of regional water utility volunteers who attend our annual conference and set our policy and priorities. We support the concept and encourage these partnerships when it makes local economic sense because growing economies of scale result in lower cost to the consumer than operating independent water utilities. The key ingredient in any successful regionalization is local support for the regional concept – and local control of when and how they choose to regionalize. NRWA's local members have led or assisted in more communities regionalizing their water supplies than any program, policy or organization."*

The House Appropriations Committee fiscal year 2018 Agriculture Appropriations bill totals \$20 billion in discretionary funding, including \$473 million for USDA's Water and Sewer Loan and Grant program that helps to construct water and wastewater infrastructure through grants and loans provided at reasonable rates and terms. Also, the bill includes \$17 million for technical assistance "Circuit Riders" who are experts to travel directly to small and rural communities to help ensure compliance with current water regulations, operations, maintenance, management, and training.

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*The National Rural Water Association is the country's largest public drinking water and sanitation supply organization with over 30,000 members. Safe drinking water and sanitation are generally recognized as the most essential public health, public welfare, and civic necessities.*

# Nebraska Good Water News

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