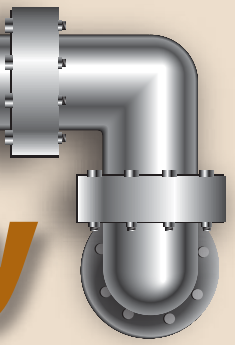




Alberta Utility Operator



PLIGHT OF THE RURAL AND SMALL TOWN OPERATOR

I would first like to say, the thoughts in this article are my own and I appreciate you, the reader, may not totally agree. In my 45 years in the water/wastewater fields, I have been employed both in the private and municipal sectors in water and wastewater treatment. While I have observed some hindrances to getting small town operators first hand training, I do not have all the answers, thus the great need for our AWWOA "Closer To Home" project. If you have some constructive ideas regarding this subject, please contact an AWWOA Executive member or John Voyer, the Executive Director at the AWWOA office.

The most obvious hindrance for small town and rural operators, both men and women, is the distance between their community and major centers. A fact of life, unfortunately, is a lot of activities are directed at major centers where, if you like, the knowledge can be shared with the greatest number of operators. So big deal if you live far off the beaten path; well I say it is a big deal! Think about it, if you live in a small community you can walk everywhere, you do not really need a car. If you are young and just starting out you probably cannot afford one. Your community may have a work truck available for your everyday work needs, but they sure cannot afford for it to be gone two or three days for employee training several times a year. Gone are the days when Greyhound and Trailways stopped in every city, town, village and hamlet; when they did it was a blessing. Before the small town operator even thinks about training they could be stymied, as he or she may not always have transportation. When one is studying to improve their knowledge base, something as basic as transportation should not have to be a concern to them. Talk about being defeated before you even begin. Maybe neighboring communities could car pool private vehicles and/or work trucks, or on a larger scale they could rent a ten-passenger van for their operators?

Big communities, as their work force increases, are more able to bring on additional staff for shift coverage against vacation, sickness, union, internal training and water/wastewater training requirements. Oh, how our small town operators must envy the larger communities from this perspective. I know how difficult it is for some of our smaller communities to meet the "certified operator" requirements for their water and wastewater utilities. They may wish to comply, but even if their budget and manpower requirements fill all the needed positions, that is only good if no one dies, retires, quits or transfers. Having extra-qualified staff to cover for the absence during training, vacation and sickness puts their coverage limits over the top. How do they fit training into the schedule? The only solution I can think of is, again, co-operative efforts with neighboring communities. Maybe offsetting vacations and training in neighboring communities with shared coverage and some reasonable flexibility from the regulator could be a good start?

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I think sometimes the people in managerial or decision-making positions in the small town municipal environment should think twice before taking the job or seeking nomination to the position. These men and women are usually long-standing people with deep roots in the community. In this age of technical advancement not just in computers but also in process, mechanics, engineering, environment and especially water and wastewater treatment, these people must have an inherent desire to keep up with the knowledge in these areas. Too many times I have seen good intentions turn a project upside down based on people in decision-making positions using knowledge from the 1950's and trying to apply it to the twenty first century. Just like the operators who serve each and every community in all Alberta who must continually increase their knowledge base if they want to keep their "certified operator" accreditation, should the ratepayer not expect the very same from the people who serve their communities in higher decision making positions? When everyone in small town managerial and decision making positions are not up on the latest advances in technology, environment regulations, approvals and enforcement, how can we expect them to see the need for continued operator training.

Having worked in the municipal environment for thirty-five years through "zero budgets," those times when provincial subsidy was available, and everything in between, budget funds do play a big role and can affect training. For smaller communities with aging infrastructure and smaller tax base, budget funds are even tougher to acquire. In a recession environment, construction companies are grabbing at the biggest contracts to keep overhead down, this makes it harder to entice a contractor for the smaller town project. Sometimes they have to pay a premium to get the contractor on their job. The contractors try and perform the smaller town jobs in-between the large ones or in the off season, creating their own specific issues to overcome and inevitably costing the small town more budget funds than originally passed by council. This could be one reason why funds for training get depleted and training unfortunately takes a back seat on the municipal priority list.

Historically, advancements in technology have driven regulators to tighten treatment limits to protect the customers and the environment. This reflex reaction, while having the best of intentions, may sometimes result in placing the need for process upgrades on a faster track than communities can plan and budget for smoothly. Smaller communities will have a harder time securing the financial, planning, construction and operator resources. This merry-go-round results in the municipality always playing catch-up, being reactive and having no opportunity to be pro-active. This situation can give rise to pushing training farther down the priority list because there is a constant struggle just to "meet everyday needs." If the community always feels they are being forced into upgrading with all the responsibilities, no wonder they may be reluctant to move forward when it seems these upgrades come one after another, placing much pressure on not only the operator, but also the community at large.

Although out of room here, there are other issues that I feel inhibit operator training in small communities under 5000 population:

- Lack of understanding by municipalities of AWWOA training options and opportunities
- Lack of mentorship in the small town environment
- Fear in calling for technical knowledge and mechanical assistance
- Lack of recognizing the value of "first hand" transfer of knowledge via training
- Need for an intermediary between small communities and the regulator

The following points list actions and attitudes supportive of operator training:

- Understanding the people and organizations that can help you
- Understanding what is given up when contracting out
- Increased awareness from not just community leaders, but the community at large
- Increased sensitivity from the regulator to small town training issues
- Funding for small communities to carry out needed training

Doug Thorson, AWWOA member

The Alberta Utility Operator Newsletter provides a forum for communication and networking among AWWOA members in the areas of new technologies and research, regulatory concerns and changes, outstanding service and other Association concerns. Editors welcome suggestions for content from the membership.

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Water History, Part of Alberta's Cultural Heritage

submitted by Gayle Sacuta, Co-editor, Alberta Utility Operator Newsletter

I grew up in a farming community in rural Alberta in the 1970's, where still some people did not have running water. Today, although living in Devon, I spend a fair amount of time traveling the highways and back roads, visiting in small towns and hamlets. A few of the old windmills that pumped water or charged batteries years ago still mark abandoned homesteads, though many have disappeared. The same holds true of water towers in prairie towns. July 2012, I attended the Halkirk Centennial Celebration parade. I watched bands, floats and a huge selection of old cars, trucks and tractors saunter by the Halkirk water tower in the blistering morning sun. All my photos had the water tower background and I wondered about the legacy of these standing giants on the prairie.

I asked AWWOA Executive Chair, Garth Carl, who runs the Henry Kroeger Regional Water Services Commission (servicing Delia to Oyen on Highway 9) for information about how towers worked and if any in the region still operate. He told me they would have used pumps to fill the tower during the day, then gravity feed supplied the flow. "The positive thing was that when the power failed there was still water available due to the laws of gravity. Generators were not as important as they are now. I can see the day when we go back and put these back in service," commented Garth. "One tower still operates within our system which provides us with the extra elevation to get over a few of the high spots between here and Oyen. We use gravity to feed water 110 kilometres east, and soon to include an additional 55 km south of Oyen, once we complete the Acadia Valley extension."

Instead of water, today most standing towers hold a sense of community and a certain mystique. Many people are unaware of how prevalent the towers were at one time. Readers can find technical information about kilopascals, and great photos showing architectural styles through an Internet search. According to their web site, the Town of Wetaskiwin still uses their water tower (built in 1909-1910) for part of their system, but most towns have abandoned them because of onerous maintenance costs.

Did we throw the baby out with the water tower?

"They did it a lot easier back in the old days. It's a pity so many towns tore their water towers down because now you've got to have these big bleedin' generators, I guess they call it progress," said Garth.

No doubt, other interesting stories need collecting about the history of our water utilities. Pass on your ideas.

Enjoy the issue.



Water Week 2012, Red Deer, Alberta

From November 19th to the 23rd, 2012, the AWWOA is offering seven workshops on a variety of topics directly related to the water and wastewater industry. For those who are renewing their operator certification, this is the perfect time to attend one or more workshops and earn those CEUs needed before the renewal deadline.

#1 Management & Supervision

Nov. 19, 20 and 21, 2012 - **Cost \$530 AWWOA Members** (\$630 Non-Members) - 2.0 CEUs

This three-day course will focus on the skills which operators and supervisors require to effectively manage their treatment facilities and supervise people. Specific areas covered include planning, organizing, directing and controlling. The course is designed for supervisory operators and facility managers who wish to upgrade their supervisory skills, or for those who have recently accepted the responsibilities of a supervisor.

#2 Drinking Water Safety Plans

Nov. 19, 2012 - **Cost \$300 AWWOA Members** (\$400 Non-Members) - 0.6 CEUs

This one-day workshop will train operators in the concepts of Drinking Water Safety Plans and specifically on how to complete and use Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development's risk assessment template. This training supports the introduction of Drinking Water Safety Plans by Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development as the future standardised approach to assessing and managing water supply risks.

#3 Potable Water Reservoir Design, Operation and Maintenance

Nov. 20, 2012 - **Cost \$300 AWWOA Members** (\$400 Non-Members) - 0.6 CEUs

This one-day workshop will provide water operators with information on potable water reservoir design, water quality regulations and monitoring techniques, problems associated with water storage, preventative operations and maintenance methods of reservoir disinfection and cleaning, as well as daily reservoir operations. Various methods of disinfection will be reviewed; as well, safety practices when working in and around storage facilities will be discussed. Special attention will be given to seasonal changes and to the prevention of short-circuiting/dead zones.

#4 Application and Use of Membranes for Water and Wastewater Treatment

Nov. 21, 2012 - **Cost \$300 AWWOA Members** (\$400 Non-Members) - 0.6 CEUs

This one-day workshop will present an overview of the membrane treatment processes being used for potable water and wastewater treatment systems. Design and operating aspects of the different types of membranes will be covered to identify where and how they should be used. Design considerations will include a discussion of the particular application of each, where they are being used, and how they fit into the overall treatment process. Operating considerations will include operating sequencing, expected treatment capabilities, daily operating and monitoring duties, and regular cleaning requirements.

#5 Know Your Own System

Nov. 22 (all day) & Nov. 23 (half day), 2012 - **Cost \$400 Members** (\$500 Non-Members) - 0.9 CEUs Pending

Are you looking for something new? Do you enjoy talking about your system? Do you want to make it better and easier to tackle critical safety, compliance and operating tasks? This new course will provide guidance and practical 'take-home' tools so that on-the-job training of new hires is safer, easier and tailored to your system. This one and half day workshop will be especially of interest to sole operators in smaller facilities and systems, and Lead/Sr. Operators and Operations Supervisors in any system. The course will have common explanations for all participants and break-out working sessions by discipline.

#6 Safety for Water and Wastewater Operators

Nov. 22, 2012 - **Cost \$300 AWWOA Members** (\$400 Non-Members) - 0.6 CEUs

This one-day introductory safety workshop for water and wastewater operators will include an overview of applicable legislation; operator roles and responsibilities; elements of health and safety management systems; hazard identification, assessment, and control; material safety data sheets and basics of chemical safety; and development of emergency response plans.

#7 Introduction to SCADA for Water Facility Operators

Nov. 23, 2012 - **Cost \$200 AWWOA Members** (\$300 Non-Members) - 0.3 CEUs Pending Approval

This half-day workshop covers the evolution and design of SCADA (Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition) systems and their application in water and wastewater facilities. Discussion will include the latest technologies and trends, moving away from fixed control rooms and towards web based SCADA and remote monitoring and control with smart phones.

2012 – 2013 AWWOA CLASSROOM COURSES

Course registrations for 2012-2013 are now open!
 Visit www.awwoa.ca for the entire 2012-2013 course program.

| COURSE | LOCATION | DATE |
|---|------------|--|
| Support Systems & Applied Math Certification Preparation | Lethbridge | September 19 & 20, 2012 |
| Fire Hydrant Flow Testing | Lethbridge | September 21, 2012 |
| Level I Certification Preparation Part "A" Part "B" | Calgary | September 24 & 25, 2012 October 30 & 31, 2012 |
| Level I Certification Preparation Part "A" Part "B" | Edmonton | September 27 & 28, 2012 October 25 & 26, 2012 |
| Excel 2007 - Water & Wastewater Operator Training | Edmonton | October 2 & 3, 2012 |
| Level II Certification Preparation | Edmonton | October 4 & 5, 2012 |
| Entry Level Training | Edmonton | October 10 & 11, 2012 |
| Water Distribution Systems | Calgary | October 15 & 16, 2012 |
| Wastewater Collection Systems | Calgary | October 18 & 19, 2012 |
| Entry Level Training | Calgary | October 23 & 24, 2012 |
| Water Well Operation and Maintenance | Red Deer | October 24 & 25, 2012 |
| AWWOA Water Week | Red Deer | November 19 - 23, 2012 |
| Support Systems & Applied Math Certification Preparation | Edmonton | November 27 & 28, 2012 |
| Process Control Instrumentation: Basics | Edmonton | December 6 & 7, 2012 |
| Water Distribution Systems | Edmonton | December 10 & 11, 2012 |
| Wastewater Collection Systems | Edmonton | December 13 & 14, 2012 |
| Cross Connection Control - Testers | Edmonton | December 17 to 21, 2012 |
| Level I Certification Preparation Part "A" Part "B" | Calgary | January 31 & Feb. 1, 2013 February 28 & Mar 1, 2013 |
| Level III /IV Water Treatment Certification Preparation | Edmonton | February 5 - 8, 2013 |
| Process Control Instrumentation: Intermediate | Edmonton | February 12 & 13, 2013 |
| Entry Level Training | Calgary | February 12 & 13, 2013 |
| Entry Level Training | Edmonton | February 20 & 21, 2013 |
| AWWOA Annual Seminar | Banff | March 11 – 15, 2013 |
| Level I Certification Preparation Part "A" Part "B" | Edmonton | March 26 & 27, 2013 April 25 & 26, 2013 |
| Level II Certification Preparation | Calgary | April 3 & 4, 2013 |
| Water Distribution Systems | Lethbridge | April 8 & 9, 2013 |
| Wastewater Collection Systems | Lethbridge | April 11 & 12, 2013 |
| Water Well Operation and Maintenance | Edmonton | April 16 & 17, 2013 |
| Chlorination Workshop | Red Deer | April 30 & May 1 & 2, 2013 |
| Excel 2007 - Water and Wastewater Operator Training | Calgary | May 2 & 3, 2013 |
| Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) | Edmonton | May 6, 2013 |
| Emergency Response Planning & Critical Analysis | Edmonton | May 7, 2013 |
| Support Systems & Applied Math Certification Preparation | Calgary | May 7 & 8, 2013 |
| Filter Surveillance | Calgary | May 9 & 10, 2013 |
| Water Distribution Systems | Calgary | May 13 & 14, 2013 |
| Wastewater Collection Systems | Calgary | May 15 & 16, 2013 |

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Report From the Chair

submitted by Garth Carl, AWWOA Executive Chair

I hope all of you have been enjoying your summer months; they sure disappear quickly. Seems that the weather is playing havoc with many of you, I consider us very lucky to not have had the hail or flash floods that I have witnessed on the evening news time and time again.

The AWWOA Executive met for our summer session during mid-June and I am pleased with the amount of work we were able to accomplish over the short time. We began our meetings reviewing our Strategic Plan and essentially renewed and reworked it from the bottom up. Thanks to Ms. Valerie MacLeod, MBA, for her leadership through this exercise; she was instrumental in keeping us in line and on topic through the lengthy process. As with any solid planning you must build a strong foundation. Without it, it's only a matter of time before everything above it all comes crashing down. I believe we achieved that by moving through our objectives, determining critical issues now and in the future, as well as defining a clear direction for the AWWOA — all of which are key building blocks to sustaining our future.

The next step was all about how to measure our progress, how to get to where we want to be in the future, and the strategies and actions we will utilize to move forward and achieve our goals. This took most of a day. Lastly, it was how we would keep the momentum moving forward and have a living plan as opposed to one sitting on the shelf collecting dust. The process was interesting and sometimes taxing, but I believe in the end, we have a good solid plan that will benefit our Association and it's membership.

AWWOA VISION

The Alberta Water and Wastewater Operators' Association will continually be an effective, valued and trusted organization.

AWWOA MISSION

The AWWOA serves its members by providing education, networking and training.



| COURSE's continued | LOCATION | DATE |
|--|------------|--------------------|
| Jar Testing | Edmonton | May 17, 2013 |
| Water Well Operation and Maintenance | Lethbridge | May 22 & 23, 2013 |
| Jar Testing | Calgary | May 27, 2013 |
| Small Water System Operations | Edmonton | May 28, 2013 |
| Small Wastewater System Operations | Edmonton | May 29, 2013 |
| Hydrant Maintenance and Repair | Edmonton | May 30 & 31, 2013 |
| Hydrant Maintenance and Repair | Calgary | June 4 & 5, 2013 |
| Fire Hydrant Flow Testing | Edmonton | June 6, 2013 |
| Water Meters: Selection, Installation, Testing & Maintenance | Edmonton | June 10 & 11, 2013 |
| Water Meters: Selection, Installation, Testing & Maintenance | Edmonton | June 13 & 14, 2013 |
| Water Distribution Systems | Red Deer | June 17 & 18, 2013 |
| Wastewater Collection Systems | Red Deer | June 20 & 21, 2013 |
| Ponds & Lagoons | Edmonton | June 24, 2013 |
| Ponds & Lagoons | Calgary | June 25, 2013 |
| Fire Hydrant & Flow Testing | Red Deer | June 26, 2013 |

The Old Operator

submitted by Doug Thorson

You Are Always Being Watched

Many people go about their business every day never imagining that someone may be watching them. I don't know if we are being watched. With all the electronic technology available today, it is possible. Since my wife and I are neither wealthy, politically prominent nor popular, we probably have nothing to fear. I have been heard telling people, we are probably the most unexciting people you will ever meet, so who would bother watching us?

I want to assure you, you are being watched. Are you being watched by our government? I don't know. You are being watched by your friends, workmates and for sure by your children. I know that our children listen to every word we say and every move we make, especially our granddaughter, Lilly. If I speak out of turn or critically she will remind me, and suggest that I spoke inappropriately. I don't consider that necessarily bad, I need correction as much as the next person. Lilly will tell me, "That's not nice, Pa-Pa."

When our girls were young and starting to have a little money to spend, I told them a saying my Father, their grandfather, had about money. "When it comes to money, treat everyone like a liar and a cheater," said Father. He explained to me, that what he meant by that statement was simply, "Be careful, always check twice when you are dealing with your money. Once committed you usually can't get your money back." When the subject of money came up with our girls many years later, they stated that grandfather said, where money was concerned, everyone was trying to cheat you. Something got lost in the translation, and boy did it take a lot to try and explain what their grandfather was really trying to say. We need to always be so careful about what we say, it is so hard to correct the misinterpretation later.

Donkeys, it is said, very quickly take on the character of their owner. People are warned that if they have a less than happy disposition they should not buy a donkey as a pet, or they may be in for a very ornery animal acting just like they do. As

a parent, one might compare our children to the donkey

situation. These little people watch us very

closely. If they act out or speak out

inappropriately, they probably

saw or heard it somewhere. Don't

let it be you. Long before your child

acts out what you

have taught them, they will act out what they see

and hear.

*Long before
your child acts
out what you have
taught them, they
will act out what
they see and
hear.*

Our children are like mirrors – they reflect our attitudes in life. This also goes for young and impressionable people in your circle of life. No matter how beautiful, intelligent, talented or athletic a child may be, there is no substitute for a child having a positive and loving attitude toward others. Please be assured that the foremost architect of that attitude is not going to be their friend, teacher or pastor, but you, the parent. Be careful in the attitudes you feed your children daily, they become the diet of your child's mind just as food becomes the diet for your child's body.

I will leave you with this little bit of wisdom. Don't feed your children, or your friends for that matter, with junk ideas, sour opinions, rotten theology, poisonous feelings, or wilted enthusiasm. Instead, feed your children and friends with the best and most positive ideas, expressions of feelings, and opinions you have. If as a good person, you walk sincerely in your integrity, your children will do the same. At least that's how I see it.

The Old Operator.

Who Will Follow in Your Footsteps?

by Gerry Gusdal, AWWOA Communications Committee

Over the last few years, the AWWOA has been involved in activities to promote water and wastewater careers. This includes partnering with Western Canada Water and our sister organizations in Saskatchewan and Manitoba on brochures, posters, web-sites, and videos. These tools are available to you and your employer *at no cost* in the *Recruiting Toolkit* found under the *Careers* button of the AWWOA website. The AWWOA Communications Committee has also partnered with the Closer to Home (C2H) Initiative to ensure each of you receives a complimentary copy of the *Exploring Careers in Water & Wastewater Operations* DVD to be shared within your own networks.

Through the voice of actual operators these tools tell others what we already know! That water and wastewater careers can be stable, satisfying, and flexible; careers that enable operators to work closer to home if they choose! And that they are careers providing valuable services to our neighbours, while maintaining the health of the public and protecting the environment.

But even with these tools, the most important recruitment tool we have is you - the operator! As more of us are approaching retirement, it's important to step back and ask, *Who will follow in my footsteps?* For those attending the opening of the 2012 Annual Operator Seminar (AOS), this was a major point of Gary Baptist's talk.

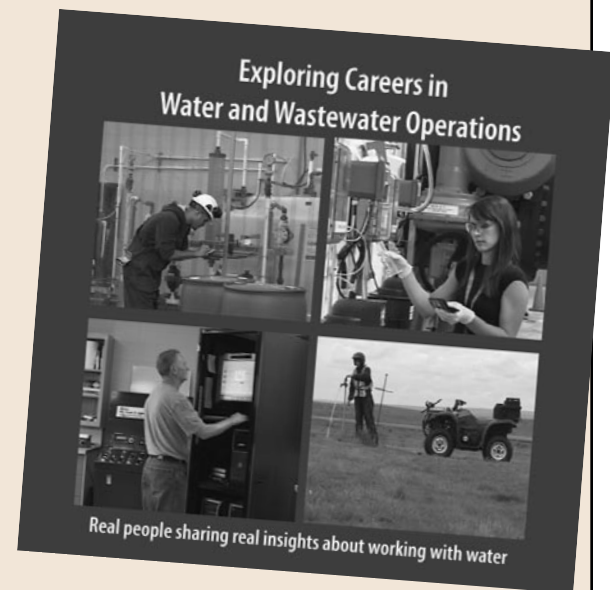
Gary, a distribution systems operator with the City of Calgary over the last 43 years, challenged us to think about who will follow in our footsteps. He challenged us to think about who will be there after us, so that our children and our children's children will have the quality and security of the water we enjoy today.

Gary also challenged us to think about our own roles and responsibilities as operators in working with management to: 1) help find the people to replace us and 2) help prepare new people so that a local system will operate 100% when we've moved on. So, what can you do to help ensure there is someone in place with the same dedication as you to ensure water continues to flow safe and clean and is properly returned to the environment?

Some of our fellow Albertans are leading the way! Leaders in Barrhead made a one-time, multi-year budget commitment to hire a NAIT graduate originating from the surrounding area to work and train with the senior operator over the next few years. The Henry Kroeger Regional Water Commission in Hanna brought on new, early career operators from the area with a clear commitment to the local community and who are being 'cultured in' by the lead operators. City of Calgary Water Services has made a significant multi-year commitment to 'download' the history and 'know how, know where, know why' of long-term persons working in network distribution, in an easy to access tool, supported by in-house training.

Aquatera in Grande Prairie has also made an investment to 'grow our own' over the next few years, using a succession management approach for operators. Several communities in central Alberta have collaborated in sharing a Certified Operator whose sole public works responsibility is looking after the water.

Ask yourself the question, *if I was gone tomorrow what would that mean for the community and what would it take to replace me?* So, after all the years you've invested in keeping your system up and running smoothly, what will you do to ensure there is the right someone to follow in your footsteps? Please let us know so we can share your good ideas with others!



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