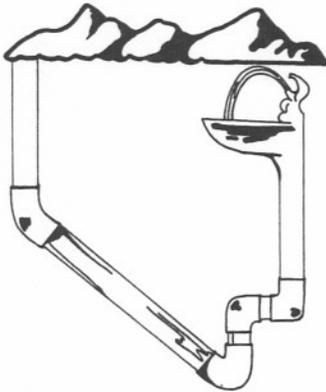


Water Lines



Water Lines is the resource newsletter and calendar of the Nevada Drinking Water and Wastewater Training Coalition.

Volume 16 Spring 2005 issue

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Special Insert Establishing a Safety Policy

Rural Community Assistance Corporation funds *Water Lines* through a contract with the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection.

Editor, Abigail Johnson

Editor and Production,
Kristin Middaugh, RCAC

Featured System: Montello Water System

By Bob Foerster, Nevada Rural Water Association
Special Thanks to Lynn Forsberg, Elko County Public Works

Originally, water was delivered to Montello, Nevada through a 6-inch redwood stave pipe to a location southwest of the town adjacent to the railroad tracks called Banvaar. A 2.5-inch line provided spring water to Montello. In the 1930s, before diesel locomotives, welded

From the 1930s to the mid 1980s, only a portion of the in-town water system was renovated. Some in-town lines were replaced and, in 1990, a steel, 150,000 gallon storage tank was built. It remains an integral part of the system. By the late 1990s, the older parts of the system were in very poor condition. Beginning in 1998, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) funded studies to determine needs and the best way to meet those needs. A study of system

Featured System

(Continued on page 2)



Water System Operator, Claudette Skelham, stands atop Montello's spring collection box.

steel pipe replaced most of the redwood. Another source at Pilot Peak was developed during the same era. This source collected water from 27 springs and delivered water to the Montello area — located in Elko County — through 14 miles of 8-inch cast iron pipe. Today, this water is used for stock watering and irrigation purposes.

Eventually, railroad service needs changed, and in 1976 the town — including rights to the spring sources — was sold to Montello Citizen's Community. At the same time, the railroad sold individual leased-lots with the caveat that the water lines be kept in a serviceable condition in case the railroad needed the water in the future.

Arsenic rule deadline looms

By Bert Bellows, Bureau of Health Protection Services

Approximately 135 public water systems in Nevada must comply with the new Arsenic Rule which takes effect in less than a year, yet only about 20 systems have filed exemption requests with the Bureau of Health Protection Services.

Technically, water systems have had five years to meet the new maximum contaminate level (MCL) of 10 parts per billion, and yet, only a few have done so. Why? Most systems are in compliance with the old standard of 50 parts per billion. Now, systems that never had to treat their water are faced with treatment, and treatment can be a daunting task.

The New Arsenic Rule was set in January of 2001, and will take effect on January 23, 2006. When Congress mandated the new rule, it provided some funds for the U.S. Department of Environmental Protection (EPA) to

(Continued on page 3)

Featured System

(Continued from page 1)

options for the renovation project found that potential nearby water sources had become contaminated. Before customers could connect to the railroad-owned spring water system, many small, 50-foot wide lots were served by individual wells. When unlined cesspools on these same lots failed, the unused wells often became the sewage disposal point.

Because sources of water closest to the power supply were contaminated, more distant springs became the logical water source. Using only these spring sources, the current Montello system is gravity fed and uses no electricity. CDBG provided \$190,000 for Phase One spring development along with \$90,000 for engineering. Phase Two included \$230,000 in engineering, spring renovation work and meter services at low-income properties.

The majority of needed renovations, costing \$1.125 million, were provided from AB198 State of Nevada funding backed by bonds. V-Point Engineering was hired as consultant for the system study, preliminary engineering and design. HighMark Construction completed the project. A retired independent contract inspector provided Elko County with inspections during construction.

During the Phase One spring renovation, seven springs were consolidated into one source. Collection systems with valves to enable isolation of each spring also were installed. There is a v-notch at the spring box to gauge flow. About five miles of 6-inch transmission line running from the springs to the steel tank was installed and 8-inch HDPE pipe (1,500 ft. of

line) was run from the springs to outside the spring area and connected to the 6-inch transmission line.

Some of the long-abandoned, original 2-by-12-inch redwood box culvert collection system was found and replaced during this phase of the project. The spring source passed determination testing for groundwater under the direct influence of surface water and does not need to be treated.

As good operating practice — considering there are six miles of transmission line — continuous disinfection is applied. At the tank, a pressure-sustaining valve is used to provide the differential pressure driving a gas chlorine eductor.

The chlorine facility was replaced by a fiberglass-reinforced plastic structure that houses the equipment. Total water flow is master metered at the tank, with flow averaging 120 gallons per minute.

An agreement with the Nevada Department of Wildlife allows the system's unneeded water to be left in the mountain/canyon habitat, rather than having it flow to recharge at a lower elevation.

In Phase Two, five additional springs

in the Montello Canyon headlands were combined into one source and tied to the Phase One 8-inch line. Although the source has already undergone a series of tests, another round is yet needed to demonstrate it is not under the direct influence of surface water at any time of year.



Among many other things, Phase II of the Montello project included collection gallery installation.

Approximately one mile of 12-inch diameter line from the tank into town was replaced.

The project replaced 2-inch, 4-inch and 6-inch in-town lines with 8-inch lines. Also, all lines are now looped, preventing dead ends and greatly reducing the potential for low pressure problems. Altogether, 4,000 feet of pipe was installed in town.

The system has 17 new fire hydrants providing fire protection to the entire town. Valves were installed so any city block can be isolated for repairs. Meters were installed at all 78 service connections. All meters are equipped with hand-wand type automated meter reading devices.

With no electricity costs and using inexpensive gas chlorine, monthly rates are now \$26 residential. The commercial rate is \$26 per equivalent dwelling unit (25 fixtures). Local resident, Claudette Skellham, operates the system. The current certified operator is Lynn Forsberg, Public Works Director.

Forsberg described Montello as a "first class system." With good basic maintenance, such as a valve turning program and periodic flushing, the system is set to provide safe drinking water, fire protection and decades of service to the community. ♠



The Montello project included installing a concrete cap on the springs.

The Spigot

Q & A



- Q.1.** Which one must be replaced when connecting a new chlorine cylinder?
- Air and water regulator
 - Fiber washer
 - Needle valve and seat
 - Pressure regulator
- Q.2.** The free chlorine residual in water is the amount of ___
- chlorine applied as measured in mg/L.
 - chlorine in raw water as it comes from the water source.
 - chlorides in the water.
 - uncombined chlorine that remains in the water after the chlorine has been applied and allowed to react.
- Q.3.** The difference between the amount of chlorine added to water and the amount of residual chlorine remaining at the end of the contact period is called ___
- chlorine dosage.
 - chlorine demand.
 - chlorine residual.
 - free available chlorine.
- Q.4.** Chloramines are formed by the addition of chlorine and
- ammonia.
 - liquid nitrogen.
 - soda ash.
 - sodium fluoride.
- Q.5.** Gas chlorinators, when operated at a high rate of withdrawal from the chlorine cylinder, can result in ___
- an explosion.
 - ice formation on the chlorine cylinder.
 - emptying the cylinder too quickly.
 - overheating the gas cylinder.

Developed by: Skeet Arasmith,
Linn-Benton College, Oregon.

Crystel Montecinos, Program Development
Specialist with the UNR Cooperative
Extension, prepares The Spigot. ♠

ANSWERS ON PAGE 7

Arsenic

(Continued from Page 1)

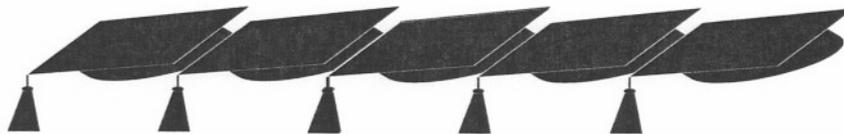
conduct research into how water systems might best find compliance solutions. EPA received \$10 million dollars to conduct research in Fiscal Years 2003 (Round 1) and 2004 (Round 2) to find low-cost solutions to arsenic compliance for small water systems. Some of the research involves large-scale pilot testing of existing technologies, as well as funding for emerging technologies.

Unfortunately, due to federal fiscal years timing, results are not yet available, and probably won't be until later this year (Round 1) and late next year (Round 2). In the meantime, however, individuals and companies continue to produce new products and processes that may prove viable in the future. In its Arsenic Guidance Manual, EPA lists

seven available, proven technologies for arsenic removal. Water systems must examine technologies to determine their feasibility. To help small water systems, EPA developed the "Decision Tree" process which is available at: <http://www.epa.gov/safe-water/ars/asdecisiontree/default.html>.

If you don't have web access, contact Bert Bellows at the Bureau of Health Protection Services. Technical assistance to complete exemption requests and review technology options is available from Rural Community Assistance Corporation or the Nevada Rural Water Association. For more information concerning arsenic issues or in dealing with the exemption process, contact Bert Bellows at: 775/687-6615 ext. 227 or bbellows@nvhd.state.nv.us. ♠

New Nevada operators certified



These operators passed entry level water certification exams for distribution and treatment grades 1 & 2. Congratulations!

Distribution grades 1, 2,

Baird, James, D-1; Beecher, David S., D-1; Brumaghin, Frank J., D-1; Clore, Herbert, D-1; Cota, Alfonso, J., D-1; Gollither, Terry R., D-1; Herrand, David B., D-1; Hutchinson, Len, D-1; Iveson, Coleen, D-1; James, Cheryl L., D-1; Johnson, Timothy L.O., D-1; Kelley, Lou, D-1; Leutzinger, Gary A., D-1; Libuszowski, David R., D-1; Maes, Christopher D., D-1; Maroushek, Steve A., D-1; McFadden, Sandy, D-1; Monaco, Robert S., D-1; Norcutt, Rick, D-1; Orefice, Phil M. J., D-1; Pickard, Stephen F., D-1; Quilici, Eugene, D-1; Ross, Steven C., D-1; Rudi, Kenneth, D-1; Sims, Alan B., D-1; Smetany, Greg D-1; Stubbs, Elizabeth D., D-1; Trochev, Svetoslav, D-1; Walker, Steven M., D-1; Weller, David J., D-1; West, Allen, Jr.; D-1; Alexson, Lori D., D-2; Cerbin, Mark D., D-2; Chah, Robert, D-2; Damele, Ronald, D. Jr.; D-2; Elsea, Joe E., D-2; Eoff, Richard Gregory, D-2; Hansen, Steven, C. D-2; Henderson, Terry W., D-2; Hu, Frank C., D-2; Kaluza, Kim A., D-2; Lovec, Mike, D-2; Parks, Eric A., D-2; Pezonella, James P., D-2; Pickworth, Richard E., D-2; Potter, Dixie Rae, D-2; Robb, John Raymond, D-2; Siqueiros, Robert G., D-2; Smith, Brent, D-2; Todt, R. Scott, D-2; Torres, Chris, D-2; Underhill, Aaron, D-2;

Treatment grades 1 & 2

Abbott, Philip L., T-1; Didonato, Michael J. Jr., T-1; Gallegos, Donna J., T-1; Pickard, Stephen F., T-1; Pickle, Todd R., T-1; Sims, Alan B., T-1; De Vaney, John, T-2; Johnson, David L., T-2; Maes, Christopher D., T-2; Peterson, William S., T-2; Stringam, Jerome, T-2

Survey seeks to assess Nevada's training needs

By Crystel Montecinos, University of Nevada Reno

Water operators in Nevada fill many different positions. The training needs of operators are as varied as their careers. The Nevada Drinking Water & Wastewater Training Coalition would like to know what types of training will suit the needs of all water operators. The University of Nevada, Reno is con-

ducting a survey to assess those needs. Please take a moment to fill out the questionnaire on page five. It also is available online or by mail. Your answers will help the Training Coalition build programs that suit all.

To complete a survey:

- Visit www.unce.unr.edu/swp/workshops and complete the online questionnaire.

- Call UNR at 775/784-6853 to request a questionnaire by mail.
- E-mail C. Montecinos at xtelle@cabnr.unr.edu
- Fill out the survey on page 5 and mail it to:

UNR\MS370
Crystel Montecinos
Reno, NV 89557
or fax to: 775/784-4789 ♠

Resources available to help prepare Consumer Confidence Reports

By Stevan Palmer, Rural Community Assistance Corporation

The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires all community water systems to prepare and distribute a Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) to its customers before July 1, every year. EPA's "Preparing Your Drinking Water Consumer Confidence Report" provides the language and direction for preparing the report. It is available at <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/ccr1.html>.

A CCR contains basic information about a water system including information on source water, levels of any detected contaminants, compliance with drinking water rules, and educational materials. CCRs summarize information that water systems already collect, so there is no need to engage in any new monitoring. The guide also includes specific language to inform the public about the level of arsenic contained in a water supply.

A CCR should be simple, concise and easy to read. It should not contain any more information than is necessary, or too much technical jargon. Most reports will fit on a few pages. A CCR delivered in 2005 will contain information collected between January and December, 2004. There are numerous examples of CCR reports available on the web. Search under "consumer confi-

dence" to find an example that you can tailor to your own utility. If you have any questions, or need assistance in filling out a CCR, contact

Rural Community Assistance Corporation at 775/323-8882 or the Nevada Rural Water Association at 775/783-7225. ♠

March changes to OpCert regulations

By Steve Brockway, Bureau of Health Protection Services

Changes in the water operator certification regulations took effect in March. Instead of 30 days, an exam application now must be received by the Health Division no later than 45 days prior to an exam. The new regulation does not affect March exams. Affected exams are June 8, Sept. 14, Dec. 14, 2005 and all following exams.

There now are minimum requirements for shift operators and foremen. Water treatment plants must have a treatment operator and distribution systems must have a distribution operator. Any water supplier that does not have a certified water system operator must notify the Health Division within 72 hours or two working days, whichever is sooner.

Anyone taking the Grades 3 or Grade 4 exam is now required to have taken post secondary courses of instruction before they can sit for an

exam. A post secondary course is defined as "An accredited academic institution or an organization accredited by the International Association of Continuing Education Training (IACET)." For Grade 3, two courses are required and for Grade 4, four courses. Courses are 36 hours each and can be taken at a college, through the Internet or via correspondence.

Treatment plants and distribution systems are now classified by a point system instead of population. Some water systems will be reclassified, going up or down a grade. Water systems will be notified and operators will have some time to get a higher grade certification if required. Contacting the Health Division is recommended. Systems reclassified to a higher grade, will be able to get higher grade certification before the deadline, which is likely to take place in a year or more. For more information, contact Steve Brockway at 775/687-6615 ext. 235. ♠

Nevada Drinking Water & Wastewater Training Coalition Training Survey

My work as a water operator is generally:

- Monday through Friday
- Mixed days
- A rotating shift including swing and night shift
- Only swing or night shift

My water system serves a population of:

- 0 to 20
- 21 to 500
- 501 to 3,300
- 3,301 to 10,000
- 10,001 to 100,000
- >100,000

I would like to see more water operator training classes:

- During weekday mornings
- During weekday afternoons
- After 5:00 PM
- On Saturday
- Online

I prefer training classes: (choose as many as apply)

- That offer lecture and handouts
- That are presented via videoconference or Internet
- That are offered by my company
- I like any classes that I can find

I would like to see more training in: (choose as many as apply)

- Distribution Topics
- Level 3 and 4 Distribution
- Level 3 and 4 Treatment
- Management Topics
- Pumps and Valves
- Safety Training
- Treatment Techniques
- Wastewater
- Water Operator Math
- Other _____

Comments or Suggestions:

Mail to: UNR\MS370, Crystel Montecinos, Reno, NV 89557

or fax to: 775/784-4789

University of Nevada offers WebCT class for Water Operators

By Jennifer Reising, University of Nevada Reno

Last fall, rural water operators had an opportunity to earn one contact hour through a pilot WebCT class. Web-CT provides Internet-based classes that allow participants to complete course work on their own schedule.

The University of Nevada's Colleges of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Natural Resources and Cooperative Extension (NRES & CE) in cooperation with the Teaching and Learning Technology Group created and administered the program. Administrators of WebCT courses are able to track participant progress and performance, and provide instant feedback on completed course work.

Entitled "A Tour of Laboratory Sample Analysis," the pilot course con-

sisted of a slide presentation and quiz. The course included health effects and sampling information on nitrates, arsenic and bacteriological contaminants. Participants logged into the class via the Internet and read through the material at their convenience. When finished, the students completed an online quiz. Participants who received a minimum score of 70 percent earned one contact hour of continuing education credit.

After the quiz, participants expressed their feelings about the course via an optional survey. Students completing the survey reported a high interest in future WebCT courses, indicating the difficulty level of the material was appropriate and the web site was easy to navigate.

Eighty-two operators were invited to participate in the pilot course. Thirteen indicated interest and were provided login names and passwords. Four operators completed the course and have received certificates for one contact hour of credit.

In the future, NRES & CE hopes to expand participant numbers and provide additional WebCT classes. The goal of NRES & CE's distance education program is to facilitate and provide Nevada's small and very-small water systems with education via the Internet or videoconference.

For more information concerning NRES & CE's WebCT project contact M. Walker at 775/784-1938 or C. Montecinos at 775/784-6853.

RESOURCE ROUND-UP

Nevada local government records management

Records are essential to the local government operation. Good record keeping practices protect the rights and interests of citizens; enable governments and public employees to account for their decisions and actions; help improve the delivery of services to the community; and make the conduct of government business more efficient and effective. In addition, good record keeping practices reduce government's exposure to certain legal, financial or political risks. Ultimately, records are a public trust, an essential informational resource for local government and its citizens and an important part of the collective memory and cultural heritage.

To obtain a copy of the local government records management manual, visit:
<http://dmla.clan.lib.nv.us/docs/nsla/records/manual/recman.htm>

For more information, contact Gerald Lindsay, Senior Records Analyst at the Nevada State Library, 775/684-3425 or gjlindsa@clan.lib.nv.us ♣

No interest/no match Wellhead Protection Grants available

No interest/no match grants are available to develop and implement wellhead protection plans for public water wells in Nevada. A request for proposals was mailed to all public water systems on March 1. The deadline to submit proposals is May 13. Water systems can apply directly to the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, or work with their consultant to prepare a proposal.

Approximately \$250,000 of non-match grants are available to Nevada communities, tribes and water systems to develop and implement wellhead protection plans to protect underground sources of drinking water. In the past, communities typically used wellhead grants to work with consultants and/or the Nevada Rural Water Association to develop proposals and wellhead plans.

Completed plans are eligible for plan-implementation funds for projects such as:

- Physical well/well house protection
- Abandoned well inventories for the community
- Land use management
- Home waste collection days
- Community mailings re: ground water protection issues (septics, dumping, etc.)
- Development of public school education programs
- Wellhead protection signs.

To receive a request for proposal, contact Nevan Kane, Nevada Division of Environmental Protection: nkane@ndep.nv.gov or 775/687-9426. ♣

Training Calendar 2005

2005

April 7—Winnemucca—RCAC Utility Safety. Info: Stevan Palmer, 775/323-8882. ♣

April 16 and April 23—Reno—Project WET (Water Education for Teachers) presents a water workshop for teachers. The workshop will present a collection of innovative, water related activities for K-12 students. For more information contact Mary Kay Riedl, Project WET Coordinator, at 775/687/9454 or e-mail at mrriedl@ndep.state.nv.us.

April 19—Las Vegas—RCAC Evaluating Your Community's Wastewater Options. Info: Stevan Palmer, 775/323-8882. ♣

April 20-21—Reno—Emergency Response Planning and Preparedness co-sponsored by National Tribal Environmental Council and National Environmental Services Center. Course is for tribal council officers, tribal staff, and technical assistance providers for tribal communities. Info: Sandy Miller 800/624-8301 ext. 5536. ♣

April 28-29—Sacramento—Comprehensive Arsenic training sponsored by the EPA. Info: visit www.epa.gov/safewater/arsenic.html

May 1-7—National Drinking Water Week

May 3-4—Las Vegas—RCAC Water Fair, May 3: Arsenic Treatment Technologies; Complying with the Arsenic Rule; May 4: Funding Options. Info: Stevan Palmer, 775/323-8882. ♣

May 17—Carson City—RCAC Water Distribution and Treatment Operator Certification Test Preparation Grades III and IV. Info: Stevan Palmer, 775/323-8882. ♣

May 18—Reno—Change Orders in Nevada seminar sponsored by Lorman. Info: 888/678-5565 or www.lorman.com.

May 18-19—Carson City—RCAC Water Distribution and Treatment Operator Certification Test Preparation Grades I and II. Info: Stevan Palmer, 775/323-8882. ♣

June 1—Reno—RCAC Utility Safety. Info: Stevan Palmer, 775/323-8882. ♣

June 3—Wastewater Certification Exam Test Preparation Videoconference (tentative date). Info: Stevan Palmer, 775/323-8882. ♣

June 14-16—Sparks—Pumps and Pumping System, Operation and Repair Training, sponsored by National Tribal Environmental Council, IHS and USDA-RD at John Ascuaga's Nugget. Course is intended for drinking water system operators and tribal drinking water utility managers, to learn the basics of pumps, review water system hydraulics and water system troubleshooting. Info: SindeeLou Thomson 916/215-1736. ♣

July 20—Tonopah—Budget Development and Rate Setting. Info: Stevan Palmer, 775/323-8882. ♣

August 17-18—Ely—Water Distribution Operator Certification Test Preparation Grades I and II. Info: Stevan Palmer, 775/323-8882. ♣

September 1—Reno—Funding Options. Info: Stevan Palmer, 775/323-8882. ♣

September 29—Reno—Arsenic Treatment Technologies. Info: Stevan Palmer, 775/323-8882. ♣

♣ *This symbol designates Nevada State Health Division pre-approved training for continuing education units (CEU) credit. Other training may be eligible for CEUs but is not yet pre-approved. Before attending any training, contact the Health Division at 775/687-6615 ext. 235 for approval. Ten hours of approved training equals 1 CEU. A different ratio applies for safety training. Contact Steve Brockway at 775/687-6615 ext. 235 for details.*

University of Nevada, Reno
Colleges of Agriculture, Biotechnology and
Natural Resources & Cooperative Extension
2005 Videoconference Training Calendar:
www.unce.unr.edu/swp.wkshps.htm

UNR videoconference classes for water system operators and managers are available in most communities. To request a workshop in your area, call Crystel Montecinos at 775/784-6853 or e-mail: xtelle@cabnr.unr.edu.

Community College of Southern Nevada
Wastewater & Water Technology Program
Info: LeAnna Risso, 702/434-6600 ext. 6418.

WWET Training in Clark County
Info: Jeff Butler 702/258-3296; see www.wwet.org for a current training calendar.

State of Nevada Water Certification Exams
All exams will be proctored during the week of the date listed. Applications are due to the state (Steve Brockway) 45 days before exam dates. A proctor will contact examinees to schedule testing. 2005 exam dates are, June 15, Sept. 14 and Dec. 14. Info: Debra Kaye, 775/834-8114.

Wastewater Certification Board Testing
Wastewater certification exams are given in March, June, Sept., Dec.; Info: 775/465-2045 or www.nvwea.org.

Answers to Spigot
1.B; 2.D; 3.B; 4.A; 5.B

Nevada Drinking Water and Wastewater Training Coalition

American Water Works Association California/Nevada Section

www.ca-nv-awwa.org
Philip Walsack, Smaller Utilities
Committee Chair, 775/841-3131
Nicole Schreuder, Education Mgr.,
909/291-2101

Indian Health Service

Dominic Wolf, 775/784-5327

Nevada Division of Environmental Protection

www.ndep.nv.gov/index.htm
Adele Basham, DWSRF, 775/687-9488
Bill Coughlin, AB 198 Water Grant Program,
775/687-9422
Nevan Kane, Wellhead Protection,
775/687-9426

Nevada Rural Water Association

www.nvrwa.org
888/884-2055
Bob Foerster, Director
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Jon Anderson
Curtis Duff
David Miller
John Scovil
Elizabeth Stubbs
Teresa Taylor
David Willard

Nevada State Health Division

www.state.nv.us/health/bhps
775/687-6615
Jim Balderson, SWAP, ext. 228
Steve Brockway, CEU approval, ext. 235
Dana Pennington, ext. 237
Bert Bellows, ext. 227 arsenic

Nevada Water Environment Association

www.wef.org
Starlin Jones, 775/861-4104
Eric Leveque, 702/792-3711

Public Utilities Commission of Nevada

www.state.nv.us/puc
Steve McGoff, Utility Engineer, 775/687-6040

Rural Community Assistance Corporation

www.rcac.org
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Stevan Palmer
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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9

www.epa.gov/region09
Marvin Young, 415/972-3561

USDA-Rural Development

www.usda.gov/rus/water/index.htm
Mike Holm, 775/887-1222, ext. 26
Kay Vernatter, 702/262-9047 ext. 113

University of Nevada, Reno Dept. of Civil Engineering

Dean Adams, 775/784-1474

UNR Natural Resources and Environmental Science and Cooperative Extension

www.unce.unr.edu/swp
Crystal Montecinos, 775/784-6853
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Water/Wastewater Education and Training Consortium of Southern Nevada — WWET

www.wwet.org
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Nevada Drinking Water and Wastewater Training Coalition

Water Lines

Spring 2005



Water Lines Special Insert

Establishing a Safety Policy

By Stevan Palmer, Rural Community Assistance Corporation

As a utility board member, you have an obligation to establish policies and programs that enable and promote a safe workplace.

A safety policy sets the ground rules for that program.

The consequences of an unsafe workplace can be devastating, especially to a small utility. Although maintaining worker's compensation insurance coverage provides utilities a measure of protection against litigation, unsafe acts and accidents can result in property

THE CONSEQUENCES OF AN UNSAFE WORKPLACE CAN BE DEVASTATING, ESPECIALLY TO A SMALL UTILITY.

damage to the utility and outside parties, lost time and interruption of services. Any of these can severely strain the often-limited resources of small utilities.

Generally speaking, a utility board is responsible for establishing a safety policy and program, and the utility manager is responsible for implementing that program. In order for a safety program to be truly effective, however, it should be developed with input and participation on all levels of the utility workforce; from operators and front line supervisors to managers and board members. Every utility is unique and should develop a safety program to address its own specific organizational structure.

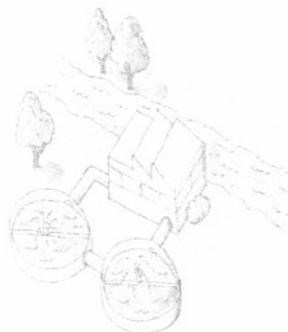
Safety Policy Statement

The first item of business in establishing a safety program is the formulation and adoption of a "Safety Policy Statement." A Safety Policy Statement is a written document that conveys management's direction concerning safety and health for all employees of that utility. It also calls for the establishment of a safety program.

A safety policy should state the following:

- The utility's recognition of safety needs
- The utility's responsibility to the employees regarding safety
- The employee's responsibility for his or her own safety and for the safety of all other fellow operators
- Who is responsible for the development of safe work practices and the enforcement of safe work practices on the job

The following page includes an example of a *Safety Policy Statement*. Note that it provides a good outline for a safety program, but it is not the same as the program. The written safety program states specifically how the directives given in the policy statement will be carried out.



SAMPLE SAFETY POLICY STATEMENT

The employer recognizes responsibility for providing safe working conditions for its employees and customers. This responsibility is met by means of a safety program which will promote safety awareness among the employees, the use of up-to-date safety equipment and the continual inspection of conditions and practices at all levels of supervision.

It is the responsibility of every employee to develop safe working habits. Safety training sessions will be conducted for all employees and employees are expected to perform their jobs in a safe manner. Negligent or unsafe conduct by an employee will subject the employee to disciplinary action.

MANAGEMENT

Utility management is responsible for the actual development and implementation of the safety program. Management must be fully informed of all safety and health issues throughout the utility in order to review the effectiveness of our safety and health program.

SUPERVISION

Supervisors are directly responsible for supervising and job training their workers. This includes proper procedures, work practices and safe methods to do the job. Supervisors must enforce program rules and take immediate corrective action to eliminate hazardous conditions and practices. They will not permit safety to be sacrificed for any reason and will be held accountable for all safety and health issues.

EMPLOYEES

Each employee, regardless of his or her position within the utility, is expected to comply with all aspects of the utility's safety and health program. Some major points of our utility safety and health program require that:

All accidents must be reported immediately to your supervisor.

- Required personal protective equipment must be worn by all employees. There are no exceptions.
- Hazardous conditions, safety and health concerns must be reported to your supervisor immediately.
- Employees participate in safety committee activities, and support safety committee membership.

TRAINING

Employers shall provide employees with adequate training for each job-specific task that requires safety precautions.

All new employees will be provided with training that sufficiently orientates the employee to the work that he or she will be expected to do.

RECORD KEEPING

The employer shall be responsible to insure that records are kept to evaluate and document the effectiveness of the safety program.

SAFETY INSPECTIONS

The employer shall be responsible for seeing that periodic safety inspections are performed to identify unsafe work conditions and practices.

If everyone does his or her part by doing what is necessary to ensure workplace safety and health, we will all benefit.

No job is so important that we cannot take time to do it safely.

Note: Once the Safety Policy has been developed, it should be approved by the governing board and issued by the highest level of management within the utility.