

The Key to Good Service: Knowledge, Experience & You

Growing up in a small Kansas town instills many good values in a person. I am a fifth generation of my family to have grown up in Enterprise and many values I hold today were taught to me not only by my parents and family but also from many of the residents of the town I am proud to call home. Anyone who has grown up in a small town knows what I mean. As a child if I did something wrong, not only did someone set me straight in my ways, by the time I got home my parents already were made aware of my misdoings and I was again set straight.

Each one of us who operates public water systems was shocked in 2016 to hear of the news out of Flint, Michigan. The “lead crisis” was and remains front page news. I hope that such a situation could never happen in Kansas. Many of the news stories improperly reported the problem as lead contamination when in fact the lead was already in the system. The Flint River water that was not treated properly caused lead from aging pipes to leach into the water supply, causing extremely elevated levels of lead in the blood of those who drank the water.

Reports show that in 2011, the state of Michigan took over Flint's finances after an audit projected a \$25 million deficit. Even though Flint's water supply fund was \$9 million in the red, officials were using some of this money to cover shortfalls in its general fund. In order to reduce the water fund shortfall, the city switched water



sources in 2014. While a new pipeline connecting Flint with Lake Huron was under construction, the city turned to the Flint River as a water source during the two-year transition.¹

The problem then resulted from improper treatment by not adding a corrosion control and that was compounded by state and federal officials who apparently ignored test results. Several have been prosecuted for their lack of action. But now, this lead issue in Flint has resulted in a

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standards on systems that already have proven that most of the systems don't have a lead and copper problem. But we are all having to comply with the regulations.

It's become a "Lead/Copper Pandemic"

Is it not proof in itself that most systems have been placed on reduced monitoring and only have to test every three years to now only have to update their test siting plans? Please don't take me wrong; I am all for updating our system mapping to show what materials the system's pipes are made of. That is only good management. To use the city of Enterprise as an example, and thanks to two KAN STEP grants, our city has replaced thousands of feet of old cast iron lines with PVC. I know of only one lead service line remaining on our system. Most of our older homes have replaced their plumbing with newer materials so the lead and copper results will only show a decline. I would also hope that as Kansans we still hold true to values instilled in us and that the governing bodies of our

¹ CNN Library. "Flint Water Crisis Fast Facts." December 21, 2016. Accessed January 20, 2016. <http://www.cnn.com/2016/03/04/us/flint-water-crisis-fast-facts/>

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systems would never take such an action as was taken in Flint that would put the water quality in jeopardy.

I do have hope that as Americans we will see a return of common sense values both in our local communities and in government at all levels. I believe a shining example of common sense thinking and the spirit of working together to better our communities is rapidly approaching. Yes, I am referring to the annual conference and exhibition sponsored by the Kansas Rural Water Association. There is no better place to be with people who are dedicated to their work, coming together to learn what is new in the water and wastewater industries to better serve communities. It's a great opportunity to interact with peers and then take what we have learned back to our communities, agencies and companies to make things better in whatever ways are possible.

This year marks KRWA's 50th annual conference and exposition. The theme is "The Key to Good Service: Knowledge, Experience & You". The

"key" to making the conference better each year is good people willing to share their knowledge. The presenters range from state and federal agencies, consultants, manufacturers and service providers and system operators and managers who will share their knowledge and experience with you. It is up to each attendee to take the information back to their cities and rural water districts and put it to constructive use. This conference is not just for operators – the governing boards and city councils need to attend as well. It takes teamwork to make a system work. This conference and exposition would not be reaching the fifty-year milestone if it were not for the good Kansas values of all those who have been associated with KRWA. I hope that each of you will attend the conference with an open mind and learn something that you can take back to your system and share. Share what you know with others! It's a small investment to make that I know can provide untold returns. It has for our community and I know it can for your's. See you in Wichita!

Paul Froelich is City Superintendent at Enterprise, Kan. Since 1983, he has worked extensively in law enforcement, emergency management and municipal operations. He holds numerous accreditations in Emergency Management and Fire and is a certified water and wastewater operator.



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