



You Know When Spring Is In the Air – “It's Annual Conference Time”

As a child I used to love winter, I have found that as I age each year I like winter less and less. The extreme cold spells that have enveloped Kansas this winter have taken a toll on many water systems across the state. Here at the city of Enterprise there have also been a few issues. Frozen water meters are usually not an issue for our system, but we have had two this year. Fortunately, they were old meters and needed to be replaced. I have been paying attention to our local media sources and have heard of neighboring systems that have experienced water main breaks during the extreme cold. Those operators who have been in the industry very long know how unpleasant a main break in extreme temperatures can be.

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“We Have an Issue!”

A few weeks ago, a strange thing happened in our system. One of our operators who does the daily checks on the wastewater side of our utilities came to me in my office and reported, “We have an issue!” He informed me that we had received an abnormal amount of water at our lift station, but in this case, it totaled 60,000 gallons more than the amount we should see on a daily basis.

Then my other operator who was doing daily checks on the water system came into my office and reported, “We have a problem!” I stopped him in mid-sentence and asked how many thousand gallons extra did we produce in the last 24 hours? He asked how I might suspicion or know of a possible water loss. I reported to him what the wastewater operator had already reported.

I told both of my operators that we needed to get out and start looking for any issues like water main breaks that could be flowing into the sewer system. After about ten minutes of patrolling the town, the problem was found. There used to be a private boarding high school in Enterprise. The administration building had not been used for some time and the natural gas had been shut off and there was no heat in the building but the water service was still active since last summer. There were several places in the building that the two-inch water line had broken due to freezing. The previous week the temperature had gotten near 50 degrees. After contacting the maintenance worker, he had shut off the flow. The way the water had entered the sewer line was through

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several floor drains. We read the water meter and from the previous reading had registered 140,000 gallons of usage! The point to be taken from this is, while this was not a city problem it very well could have been. This illustrates that doing daily checks not only documents data required by our regulatory agencies, it also can detect major as well as minor issues on the utility systems.

Not all of KRWA members and other non-members have both water and wastewater utilities. So, the problem I just described may not be quite so pertinent but I think represents a situation that we all can learn from. I have had similar things occur with a sewer system that our city provides contract operators for. Dickinson County Sewer District #1 in the unincorporated community of Talmage. While checking daily influent amounts at the lift station I noticed that there was a dramatic increase of more than 10,000 gallons. My first call was to Dickinson County Rural Water District #1 to see if they were experiencing a water loss. We never could account for the increase other than perhaps there had been a blockage in the system that broke loose, but by doing daily checks even by remote telemetry in the Talmage case we can stay ahead of problems.

Spring is Just Around the Corner . . .

As I write this article the temperature continues to drop and the winds are picking up again. But, there's a sure sign that spring is not that far off. That sign is the arrival of the KRWA Annual Conference & Exhibition program booklet. By the time this article appears I hope that most readers will have already registered to attend. This year is the 51st annual conference. As usual KRWA staff have been busy preparing this year's conference. The conference would not be possible if it were not for all the vendors who purchase booth spaces to show their wares or services. Their participation helps support the conference financially. Sponsors also help defray some of the costs of the Tuesday evening Meet & Greet. The time that the presenters give at the conference is valuable to them as they take time to prepare, travel and provide a solid technical program for all those who attend. Appreciation goes to the moderators for introducing speakers. You won't find a better training value in the state than the KRWA Annual Conference & Exhibition. Your association works hard to provide a great conference, but this is "Your Association" which requires your participation. And by participation, I do not mean just water and

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wastewater operators – but also members of governing bodies, city clerks, office staff, etc. I often suggest that while the classroom training is great, one of the best aspects of the annual conference is that the conference provides a tremendous opportunity to network with other operators, as well as those in administrative, governance and regulator roles. My challenge this year is for those who regularly attend the conference that you pick a board

member or council member and get them to attend. It's the board and council members who have the votes to make improvements, expand systems, learn about new technologies, etc. They will be surprised at what they can learn and take back to their system. Be safe in the cold, and I will see you at the conference.

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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