

How Many Cities and Rural Water Districts are Dealing with Ramifications of the COVID-19 Virus

As I sit here writing this article, I am reminded how we all depend on each other in so many ways. The biggest part of my work at Kansas Rural Water is to facilitate training sessions. In-person training came to a screeching halt the first part of March. With so much time already invested in planning the 2020 Annual Conference, it was difficult to accept that it would need to be cancelled.

With so much time already invested in planning the 2020 Annual Conference, it was difficult to accept that it would need to be cancelled.

Nearly 1,900 people had already registered and all the 365 exhibit spaces had long been filled. But it was the right thing to do. The health experts have given advice and people, including all the politicians, would be remiss to not try to abide by the directives. Subsequent to the conference dates passed, all training sessions have been cancelled or postponed as of June 1. People like me need to be around peers and I miss the social interactions that KRWA's training sessions provide.

KRWA has been working hard on getting some training to become online sessions. These would have to be approved by KDHE. I, for one, am not necessarily sold on the concept of online training. Here's why. Many operators, administrators, managers and even board/council members gain great knowledge from asking the questions of others – how and why they do things a certain way. When I started in this business 35 years ago there was a lot of turnover in staffing at our city. With the help of some operators and the tech assistants at KRWA, I made a career out of municipal utility work.

Utilities' response varies . . .

My real reason in writing this article is to discuss some of the changes in the way water and wastewater utilities are doing business. It has affected all of us in one way or another.

WaterWise Enterprises

**PROVIDING QUALITY WATER TREATMENT SOLUTIONS
THROUGHOUT THE MIDWEST**

Featuring Carus and Omni lines of Phosphates

WaterWise Enterprises offers a full-line of chemical treatment agents for potable, waste and swimming pool water.

- ✱ Technical Support on Chemical Sales
- ✱ Laboratory Testing Available
- ✱ Stenner repair and Liquid Metronic pump parts
- ✱ On-Site Delivery with liftgate service
- ✱ Pumping and Product Transfer Capabilities

Waterwise Enterprises, LLC
605 W. Main
Oxford, KS 67119
Phones: Jenelle (316) 393-0625
(jsummerow@waterwiseenterprises.com)
Diane (316) 706-0259
(dpatton@waterwiseenterprises.com)

www.waterwiseenterprises.com



Some systems are not allowing any outside visitors on the premises. Most have locked the office doors and are communicating solely by emails and phone calls. Even collecting samples has become a challenge. A certain number of things that systems do cannot be done safely by one person.

One system is only letting two employees work per day. The other two work the next day and so on. Another system has split the shifts. One employee comes in to work 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. The next shift works 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. They have commented on how there has been a lack of personal communication among department employees and not being able to meet with engineers to keep up on the progress of ongoing projects. Another system will only allow one person in a vehicle or piece of equipment at a time.

I have read how employees in other states have even arranged for workers' campers to be parked near the water treatment facilities. They remain onsite for two weeks at a time. This is what one Kansas water utility plans to do if the virus continues unabated. The workers are in self-quarantine, so to speak. They cannot see family members during those two weeks. At the end of the two weeks another shift comes in and stays for two weeks.

Most systems are practicing social distancing and are using extra disinfection practices.

Many operators, administrators, managers and even board/council members gain great knowledge from asking the questions of others how and why they do things a certain way.

Almost all systems have closed their facilities to walk-in traffic and have changed the way samples are being collected. KDHE is allowing systems to collect samples from outdoor hydrants. Special care needs to be taken if for samples collected in this manner. KDHE and KRWA both recommend the sampler adequately disinfect the outdoor spigot. The sampler can use normal strength Isopropyl rubbing alcohol (70 percent or greater). Wet the spigot with the solution, allow to sit for at least one (1) minute,

then adequately flush the tap before sampling. A solution of household bleach can also be used but the contact time on the spigot should be increased to at least five (5) minutes. I encourage you to check other articles in this issue and also KRWA's website for more information on these topics.

As always, KRWA staff are available for onsite assistance as any system requests or if referred by agencies.

Bret Beye joined the KRWA staff in March 2017. He previously worked for 30 years at the city of Herington where he was Water Distribution and Sewer Collection Foreman. A Class III water operator and certified as a backflow device technician, Bret also served on the USD 487 Board of Education from 2003 to April 2017 where he was board president and vice-president.



COMPLETE PUMP AND MECHANICAL SERVICES

VERTICAL & HORIZONTAL **LARGE TO SMALL**

DOUGLAS PUMP SERVICE

EMERGENCY SERVICE
COMPLETE MACHINE SHOP
REPAIR SHAFTS AND SLEEVES
BALANCING AND VIBRATION ANALYSIS
ALL TYPES OF PUMP REPAIR
BLOWERS AND MIXERS
DEEP WELL SERVICE
GEAR BOXES

SUBMERSIBLE **LARGE TO SMALL**

Tel: 913-236-8222 Fax: 913-262-8992 • 4719 Merriam Drive • Overland Park, KS 66203 • www.douglaspump.com