

Necessary Adaptations During COVID-19; Implications for the Future



Springtime brings a welcome change. Longer days encourage new life as the birds return, grass changes color and begins to grow. Farmers have finished planting this year's crops, etc. Elmer and the KRWA staff are busy planning the 2022 Conference. Employees here in Sabetha have completed the spring ritual of getting the pool ready for the season, which was opened on May 22, with good attendance. Baseball and softball have started as well, with no restrictions. Mowing and street maintenance have begun in earnest. This is the time of the year that the municipal and rural water district employees become extremely busy. So, it does appear we

are returning to some kind of normalcy. The seasonal change is welcome. The changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic have stressed the importance of adapting to change and being prepared for it.

As everyone is aware, the last twelve-plus months have been quite an ordeal. Restrictions due to COVID-19 made life different in so many facets of the word. So many people were working remotely, students could not attend school, no visitors at rest homes to see relatives. The list goes on and on. It is a crazy and different time that I have never seen before in my lifetime. Slowly though, we are starting to see daylight at the end of the tunnel. Schools will open back up. Restrictions at rest homes and care centers have been relaxed to allow visitors. People are returning to work. The vaccine is available to almost anyone who wishes to get vaccinated – which everyone should – which in turn is helping with things opening back up.

PEC
PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING CONSULTANTS

ENGINEERING SERVICES FOR MUNICIPALITIES

- Municipal Services • Distribution Systems • Water Storage Systems
- Water Well Design • Computer Hydraulic Models
- Pumping Systems • Sewer Collection Systems • Treatment Facilities
- Streets and Roads • Drainage Design • Rural Water Districts
- Landscape Architecture Services • Land Development Services

ENGINEERING SERVICES MECHANICAL | ELECTRICAL | STRUCTURAL | CIVIL
FIELD SERVICES INSPECTION | TESTING | SURVEY | GEOTECHNICAL
Learn more at www.pec1.com

KANSAS LOCATIONS WICHITA, TOPEKA, LAWRENCE, PITTSBURG

The seasonal change is welcome. The changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic have stressed the importance of adapting to change and being prepared for it

One way we've had to adapt is remote meeting. Whether KRWA board of directors' meetings or training webinars, working remotely is now commonplace. The "walls" concerning work done in a business office have been opened and it's been proven that people can accomplish work remotely and be accountable for their time doing so. While no one wants virtual meetings to replace in-person conversation, we now know business can be done from just about anywhere in the world. KRWA adapted to COVID by hosting 24 virtual training webinars since the pandemic began, allowing operators to maintain their operator certifications – but more importantly, those webinars provided the 1,530 who attended to learn about essential topics related to the water and wastewater industries. Being able to adapt to difficult challenges is absolutely necessary for utilities.

Utility workers, whether at a municipality or rural water district, wear many hats. Many water operators, wastewater operators, city administrators, city clerks, billing clerks, and other office personnel are very invested in their respective communities. The city maintenance person in a small Kansas community not only takes care of the water and wastewater system, streets, parks as well but many times is the fire chief of the volunteer fire department or an EMT on the ambulance service. A significant portion of these personnel are also members of the local fire department, ambulance service, storm spotters. Having the ability to adapt to

Having the ability to adapt to challenges is important, but being prepared is just as necessary.

challenges is important, but being prepared is just as necessary.

Severe storms in the spring bring plenty of consternation to everyone especially to emergency personnel. As I write this article, there are tornados spotted in western Kansas around the Hays area. This is a perfect reason why all

municipalities should have an Emergency Operation Plan that details the chain of command and details all pertinent contact information. This plan should be reviewed annually with city or RWD personnel and the county emergency preparedness department. Some counties host drills that allow utilities to practice emergency response before the disaster hits.

Challenges come, and whether they are severe storms, extreme cold or a new virus, utilities must continue to provide service. Being prepared and ready to adapt will help keep the water flowing, no matter what! KRWA has been and will continue to be here as your partners to help deliver quality water and quality life.

Bill Shroyer is Assistant City Administrator at the City of Sabetha. Bill worked for KRWA from 1994 to 1999 as KRWA's first Wastewater Circuit Rider. He was elected to KRWA's Board of Directors in 2014 and to the National Rural Water Association Board of Directors in 2016. He holds Class III water operator certification and Class IV wastewater operator certification in Kansas.



VIP | Your Kansas Water Tank Maintenance Professionals

SERVICES | CONSULTATION | CLEANING | INSPECTION | PAINTING | REPAIRS | MAINTENANCE PROGRAMS



**Need a timely response?
Contact Rick Penner today!**

Phone: +1 316-651-6164
Email: rick@viptanks.com
233 S. Weaver Street
Hesston, Kansas 67062
vikingindustrialpainting.com