

Computer Corner



Uncle Sam Wants You... To...
GET THE LEAD OUT!

One of the hottest topics in the Water Industry is the new Federal EPA-mandated Lead/Copper Reporting Requirements (LCR), sending water systems all over the nation scrambling to comply. The EPA website states, "...recent action extends the revised LCR's compliance deadline to October 16, 2024, to ensure that drinking water systems and primacy states continue to have the full three years provided by the Safe Drinking Water Act to take actions needed for regulatory compliance."

While writing this article, I heard from a customer needing some help ending her month. She really didn't need my help; she was doing just great and only needed a little reassurance. But, she started telling me of the tedious work she had been doing lately to compile information regarding her customers related to lead. "Ah, yes", I said, "the hot topic these days, lead!" She had been trying to find the best and most efficient way to do this. She told me she was not impressed with the spreadsheet the government had provided her to track the years her customers' homes were built so she was going on the Internet and collecting that data from Geographic Information System Mapping (GIS). She said she planned to attend a session in Topeka in October on the subject. I told her I had other customers who had been to KRWA training on the subject. But, I was glad to hear from her about this before she did a lot of preliminary work. I explained that there were features in her current utility software, including import and export abilities, that can help her accomplish her task.

Since we had already been working on this with customers in Kansas and other states, we had the Kansas "Lead Service Line Inventory Spreadsheet" she would

most likely be receiving at the upcoming training. So, we passed the spreadsheet on to her and discussed how she could incorporate the data she already has in her utility program. We showed her a feature in our software that would greatly reduce the time she would need to spend to comply. This new data will be able to be archived and later accessed in one place – the same place she retrieves her other customer data – the system's utility program. She was delighted with that prospect, especially because she wanted to use the Mail Merge feature in the utility software to send letters to all of her customers verifying the data.

I would implore clerks and RWD office staff to, before spending hours trying to reinvent the wheel or starting from the ground up typing in data, to contact their software providers anytime something like this comes down the pike, to see if their existing software products already have features that could assist them. As a start, a water system should check with their utility billing and maintenance software providers to first determine what their software may already offer for handling this information and what software updates or new features may be available to ease meeting these new requirements. As always, I would also recommend that the folks working on this project use the Kansas Rural Water Association for training, answering questions and staying updated on any changes. KRWA will answer your calls and if they don't know the answer, they will find someone who can – and very soon.

I would also ask that anyone teaching classes or advising water district or city staffers to remind folks that it's a good idea to contact their software technical

Graphic by Linda Windler

support providers to ask them for their help and advice. Sometimes clerks are overloaded and inundated with separate redundant spreadsheets, databases and other applications. Think of software like medicine and dietary supplements. A good doctor will want to know what medicines or vitamins a person takes before prescribing something new to make sure that something new is a good fit and not redundant or even detrimental.

One of the issues we have encountered is that there doesn't seem to be a standardized approach by the various states and their regulatory agencies in how water systems are to comply with the new federal Lead/ and Copper Rule revisions. Fortunately, in Kansas, KRWA and state agencies are helping to ease the pain. Training has been and will continue to be available across the state and also available virtually by KRWA.

While we have the "Kansas Lead Service Line Inventory Excel Spreadsheet", other States have PDF forms or require online logon and Web-based forms to be filled out. And the allowable acceptable answers, codes and acronyms used in many cases for the same questions are completely different.

Several of city and rural water district office staff are sending out form letter questionnaires to owners of each service address requesting they answer those questions whose answers are probably easily known to them or the property owners. Some of these questions that would add hours and days of work to water district staff may be simple to answer by the property owner, such as: In What Year was the Home or Building Built? What are the Building/Premise internal water service lines made of? If known, what is the service line made of from the meter to 18 inches inside the building or home? Is there a best time to contact you or to get access to physically inspect the water service line where it enters your home?

All water systems in Kansas should stay apprised of any changes in interpretation, updates in policy, or implementation of compliance requirements by regularly reviewing the available information or by contacting KRWA. Some states are requiring water systems to perform a physical inspection of water service lines, defined as service lines from the water meter to 18 inches inside the household. And, in the case of pre-approved water quality monitoring locations - the

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internal water service lines may also need to be physically inspected to verify or audit a previously existing Lead Survey of these approved water sample test locations. Maintenance staff I have talked to are saying they spend an inordinate amount of time and already have a great monthly expense in complying with water quality sampling and test requirements, as they are already doing some sort of water sampling, testing and reporting every single day. Anything that could help reduce this additional burden would be greatly appreciated.

As a result, we have added new features to our software to help reduce the work necessary to request and collect the lead/copper information, save, retrieve and report the required information and follow up when necessary at a particular service address. The goal is to meet the requirement as easily as possible and provide a readily accessible archive for now and in the future. The government does not specify a particular archival form, database, spreadsheet, etc, but does require the information be available for review upon request by regulatory agencies. Our job is to try to make your job easier. I do not doubt other software providers are doing so as well.

It appears as though polyfluoroalkyl substances – known as PFAS, are likely to be the next "Policy Speak" mandates coming down the pipeline.

My Advice to all is: "Work Smarter - Not Harder!"

Linda Windler and her husband Merle are owners of Thoroughbred Systems, Inc., Topeka. The company specializes in utility billing for cities and rural districts, computer networking and associated training. Contact: lindawindler@yahoo.com



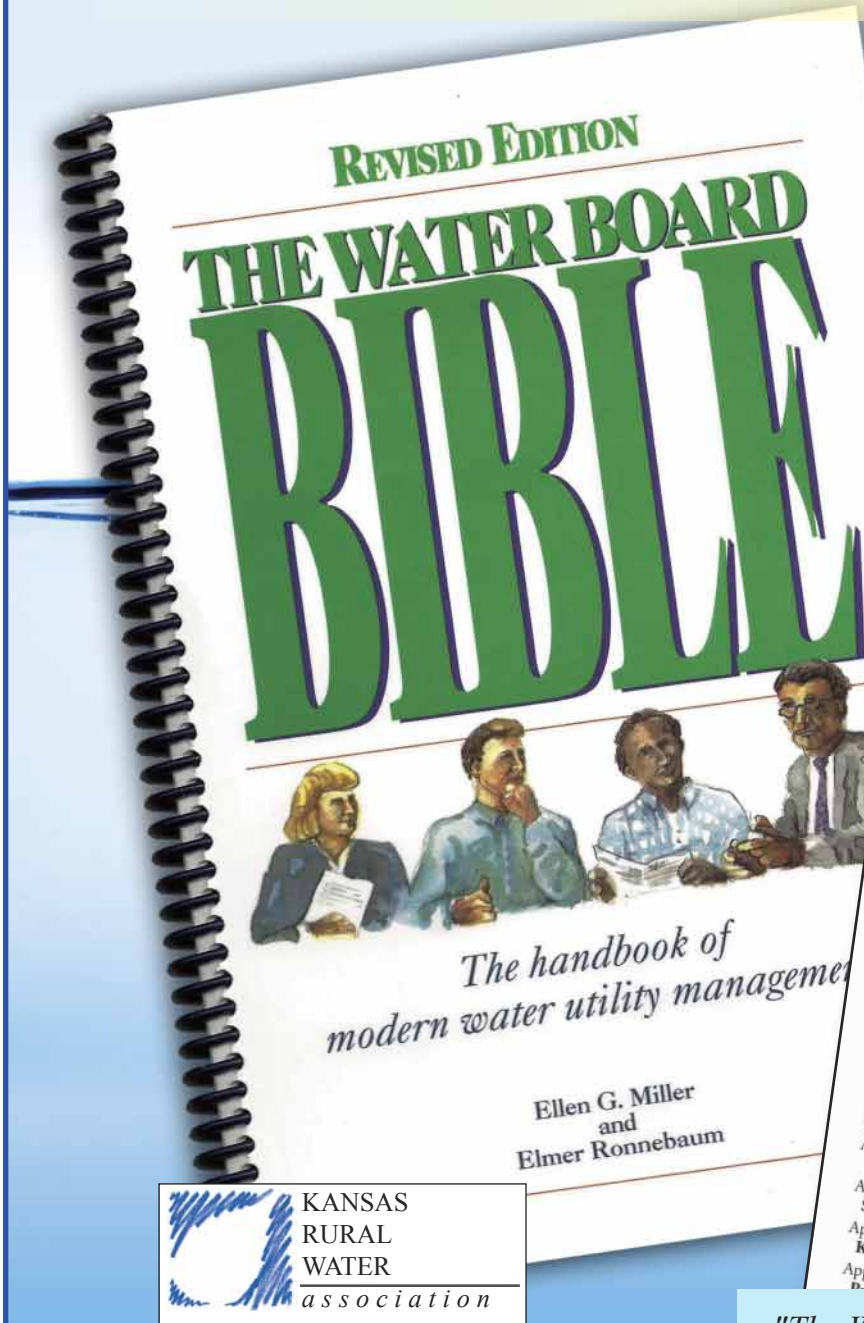
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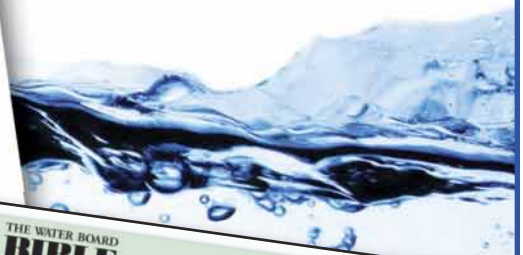
Linda K. Windler of Thoroughbred Systems
(Not a Recent Photo)

A newly updated *Water Board Bible*
is now available from Kansas Rural Water Association



Building on the strong foundation document authored in 1993 by Ellen Miller and Elmer Ronnebaum, the "Bible", was reprinted in 1995 and again in 2010 with minor revisions.

A much more extensive review and updates in the 2016 printing were provided by Gary Hanson, Stumbo Hanson, LLP (ret.).



THE WATER BOARD BIBLE

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"The Water Board Bible strikes the right tone with respect to current trends including diversity in the workforce, open government and post-Flint regulatory climate as well as the relationship with the consuming public and their water supply expectations,"

– Gary Hanson

KRWA also continues to make its handbooks available to other state and national organizations. More than 47,000 copies have been provided.

To obtain copies, contact KRWA, 785.336.3760.

Funding for the 2016 printing is courtesy of the Kansas Rural Water Finance Authority. The Authority has offered to donate copies to every rural water district in Kansas, upon such request. The handbook will also be used for board training provided by KRWA.