

Dealing With Continuing Change – KRWA Stands at the Ready

To say that we are living in uncertain times may be a bit of an understatement. You can't read the news without seeing a headline of another mass shooting or many deaths from illicit fake drugs. I remember as a high school student in Chapman, Kansas that if there was a pickup truck parked outside the school there was a shotgun on a rack in the back window, yet there were no school shootings. I always thought my grandparents were just talking like older adults when they would say that they missed simpler times. Now I find myself saying the same thing.

As we emerged from the pandemic, we all thought things would settle down, like the economy and supply chain issues. Any water system trying to obtain supplies for any size project, let alone daily needed parts, has discovered that we are not back to "normal". From the inability to obtain water meters, fittings, and equipment parts, everyone is experiencing delays in receiving products and materials.

Staffing our water and wastewater systems has even become a significant issue. Staffing issues have been



evident across the board, from the office to the trench, it seems fewer and fewer people want to work. It seems no one wants to work. It used to be an issue of not providing good benefits. Today it is a matter of just finding a warm

body that will show up for more than a day or two of work. To compound the issue, the regulations that water and wastewater utilities are held to are constantly changing. It seems that the federal government sometimes moves the goal posts after the ball has been kicked. This has never been more true than today, with the changes coming in the revised lead and copper rule. KDHE and KRWA have been providing information as to what will be required in the new system inventory to satisfy the revisions of the Lead and Copper Rule, otherwise known as the LCRR. If you have not kept up with this, you had better get up to speed.

While we all strive to produce and deliver top-quality water the revised rule appears to add an unnecessary burden for systems that have never violated the Lead and Copper Rule in the past. Many water systems have a water profile that is scale forming and does not leach lead and copper out of the system. They have never had an issue in the past or systems that have had an entirely new distribution system of PVC and poly pipe and would never have a problem, yet those systems will be burdened with the new rule. Furthermore, the added responsibility of determining what the

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customers have for piping from the meter into their property is now placed on the system. In many opinions, what is beyond the system's ownership or control should not be the system's responsibility. Talk of potholing service lines? Good luck being on private property in someone's house yard "looking for a service line" with a potholer/vacuum machine. Or hiring some contractor to make guesses as to how many lead service lines might be in a city. Have we lost all common sense or reasonableness? I encourage you to read the article by KRWA staff member Daryn Martin, "Change is in the Air – A Look at the Lead and Copper Rule Revisions" on pages 50-55.

One thing has remained constant through all the continuous changes: your Kansas Rural Water Association stands at the ready to assist water and wastewater systems across the state. When the pandemic hit, KRWA had already tested several platforms to provide online training. None of the KRWA staff stopped going to help systems. They observed CDC guidelines. Additional staff were added to meet increased needs to help cities, rural water districts, trailer courts, truck stops, etc., and also, private well owners.

I want to applaud the efforts of the KRWA staff in working with state and federal agencies on the new Apprenticeship program. There are presently fifteen persons enrolled in this program which will help the candidates achieve certification through training by KRWA staff and also professional online courses. I encourage water and wastewater utilities to investigate the program more by contacting KRWA and particularly Monic Wurtz. Email Monica at monica@krwa.net.

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Remember, help is only a phone call away. KRWA is a strong organization. KRWA is the "go-to" organization with staff who have more than 600 years of experience working with water and wastewater utilities – from funding applications to testing meters and hydrants or measuring sludge in lagoons – and keeping up with all the regulations and changes.

Annual conference, March 28 – 30, 2023

I also want to invite readers of this magazine and others to attend the 2023 KRWA Annual Conference & Exhibition. The dates are March 28 – 30. The conference will again be held at the Century II Convention Center in Wichita. The KRWA conference is for members and non-members alike. You will find this conference unlike any other with all the training sessions, the 360 or so exhibits, plus

spirited entertainment. It's a good investment to attend. I hope to see you there. I especially want to ask board and council members to attend so they can learn how to better support their staff who work 24/7 to keep water and wastewater utilities in shape to provide essential services.

Since 1983, Paul Froelich has worked extensively in law enforcement, emergency management and municipal operations. He holds numerous accreditations in Emergency Management and Fire. Certified in both water and wastewater, he recently retired as City Superintendent of Enterprise, Kansas. He has been a member of the KRWA board of directors since 2013.

