

# Training, Training – and More Training

**W**ater and wastewater treatment plant operators provide an essential service to the community by protecting the health of the general public and the traveling public, whom they serve as well. Operators also play an essential role in protecting the environment. As a result, operators are required to achieve certification at the required level based on the community's population and the treatment complexity.

The operator certification program in Kansas is a relatively long-standing program that was a voluntary program before becoming mandatory in the mid-1970s. Since becoming mandatory, all public water supply systems and wastewater treatment plants must have at least one certified operator in responsible charge of the system. Certification is achieved by passing the appropriate test, and to retain certification, operators must obtain training credits by attending a minimum number of training hours. Therefore, it is no great surprise that training is a key component of the overall certification program.

The session included an outdoor exercise to demonstrate equipment for locating water lines.



## Why is Training Important?

Training is essential to expand an employee's knowledge to perform tasks to complete job requirements. Training operators, whether new or experienced, is necessary to stay on top of plant operation and maintenance requirements and stay informed of changes in regulations and requirements. Employees who are adequately trained and continue to receive training generally are more satisfied with their work. As an operator becomes more comfortable with work requirements, the more valuable the operator becomes to the community. A well-trained operator will be more efficient and more productive, usually resulting in a reduction in downtime as well as experiencing fewer accidents on the job.

The Kansas Rural Water Association (KRWA) is one of several organizations that provides training throughout Kansas. Training has been, and continues to be, one of the most important functions of the Association. Since 1976, KRWA has been conducting training sessions across the state covering various subjects. As of September 1, KRWA has provided or facilitated 3,174 sessions attended by 193,738 people. Training sessions were conducted on-site until the pandemic in 2020 when most people were at home



The Manhattan Fire Station is an exceptional training venue.



This photos show Jeff Trowbridge, Subsurface Solutions, as he explains a locator's operation theory.

or more or less isolated to avoid contracting COVID. To offer a training option for operators needing to satisfy re-certification requirements, KRWA began offering online sessions. The online sessions generally received positive comments, especially from those who preferred not to travel and from those who could not travel. On-site sessions continue to be very popular and are necessary for hands-on training.

### Recent hands-on training events

Kansas law requires that all water and wastewater pipelines be locatable. KRWA recently sponsored specialized training seminars about utility locates. On August 10, one of these seminars was held in Manhattan. The presenter was Jeff Trowbridge with Subsurface Solutions. Jeff has been in underground utility locating for the past 18 years. Jeff was excellent in discussing line-locating procedures and challenges, as well as demonstrating the usage of equipment. Jeff also moved the group outdoors to perform actual locates. Quality line locating is necessary for damage prevention and safety for employees and the general public near excavation sites. This training event included a brief discussion by Daryn Martin, KRWA, about the revisions of the Lead and Copper Rule. Stay tuned about the lead and copper rule changes, as KRWA will be adding sessions to keep people informed about changes to this rule. The day's final topic was Greg Metz's presentation, also with KRWA, about valve exercising and maintenance.

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The best part of KRWA training includes many sessions with “hands-on” exercises. This photo shows Michael Pontrelli with Stenner Pump beginning that part of the training session.



These photos show the Stenner Mobile Training Van used to help operators learn how to perform maintenance on peristaltic pumps.



Another hands-on training session was held on August 24 at the Rock Springs Ranch 4-H Center south of Junction City. Michael Pontrelli, the Regional Sales Manager for Stenner Pump Company, conducted this training session. This pump training is designed to inform water and wastewater personnel about the operation and maintenance of peristaltic metering pumps. As probably everyone in this business knows, solution feed pumps are used extensively to add various chemicals to achieve maximum results, mainly to feed chlorine at public water supplies. Precise metering must be accomplished to provide safe drinking water to the public. These pumps must be adequately maintained, and this type of training is badly needed. Daryn Martin provided an overview of the proposed changes to the lead and copper rule to complete the day's training. KRWA Circuit Rider Greg Metz discussed safety in the workplace with operators at the session.

These hands-on training sessions were very well received by all those in attendance. I would encourage anyone interested in learning more about peristaltic pumps or line locating to check the KRWA website for upcoming training sessions. I'm sure more training sessions will be added to the KRWA calendar.

A link to the KRWA training schedule is included, showing the sessions that KRWA is planning. Also, additional sessions are regularly added throughout the year, so please check the website from time to time. Finally, if anyone is interested in any session or topic not shown on the calendar, don't hesitate to contact KRWA at 785.336.3760 or contact a KRWA staff member.

<https://www.krwa.net/TRAINING/Schedule-Register/c/training>

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) also has a training calendar that you can check at the included link.

<https://www.kdhe.ks.gov/DocumentCenter/View/5205/Water-Wastewater-Operator-Training-Calendar-PDF>

But again, ALWAYS check [www.krwa.net](http://www.krwa.net) to verify the scheduling by Kansas Rural Water Association.

*Bert Zerr is currently a consultant with KRWA. He has been with KRWA since 2005. Prior to that, Bert was a District Engineer with the KDHE in the Salina District Office for 32 years.*



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