



In the November 2022 issue of *The Kansas Lifeline*, I lamented the loss of simpler times. And I do so still miss them. It was convenient not to have to fret about whether I left everything locked up nice and tight when I left home or not to worry about whether someone would shimmy under my truck and snatch my catalytic converter while I was sleeping.

All of us can agree that simpler is better. Usually, simple means short, sweet and to the point. Again, we can all agree that water and wastewater regulations are the furthest things from simple. The Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) Rule is no exception. The CCR is an annual report that all Community Water Systems (meaning all cities and RWDs) must complete and make available to their customers before July 1 of every year. Many systems work with KRWA to post their CCR on the KRWA website and then send a notice of the web address to their customers. That is one extremely excellent service.

For many water systems, the CCR process is just that: receive notice from KDHE that the CCR is due, contact KRWA to get the CCR posted on the website, add the web address to the bills, sign the Certificate of Delivery for KDHE and send it back. Not much thought is needed, and it's a pretty simple process. The CCR is intended to increase knowledge and awareness of the water utility, but the system's customers must read the thing before they can be informed by it! Any utility staff that have spent time organizing or reading their CCR knows what I mean when I say that the required language is unreadable! Is there anyone in an agency who believes that the readers of a CCR will understand what a Haloacetic Acid is, much less my favorite secondary contaminant – CONDUCTIVITY @ 25 C UMHOS/CM? Although the original intention of the CCR is admirable, a more straightforward means of communication is needed – and way past due. Or does everyone just keep printing what

in most cases, is mumbo jumbo to most readers? Wouldn't it be good if the required documents could be written from the readers' perspective?

Most public utilities do a very poor job of informing their customers. Only a very small number of public utilities have positive public relations campaigns. Small, rural systems have an advantage over our larger neighbors in that we actually know our neighbors. But, how are we informing our neighbors about the condition of their utilities or burdensome new rules to follow? Social media is an excellent tool for informing our customers. More utilities should use their social media accounts to highlight the day-to-day operations AND emergency fixes. How many utility customers know the water department employees were fixing a line break all night in subzero temperatures (we recently had 92 continuous hours of sub-freezing temperatures) so the customers could wake up and take a hot showers while their cups of coffee were brewing? A picture is worth a thousand words on its own, but social media allows users to add a caption explaining the picture! Of course, remember to keep it simple: short and to the point! While I use some social



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media, another method is to showcase the utility operations on the cities or water district's website.

Every utility customer has an opinion, and those customers with negative opinions are often the most willing to share. Utilities should do more to inform those customers so they develop informed opinions and help spread the message. Public utilities are owned by the ratepayers. If the only way the utility is communicating with its customers is through the CCR (or through a Boil Water Advisory), then of course, the customers will be uninformed. No wonder the customers complain when rates are adjusted. They do not realize what operating the water and wastewater utility requires. The utility representatives have a responsibility to inform customers of the work and money that goes into keeping the clean water coming and the dirty water going!



waitlist in case of any cancellations. KRWA's conference comes complete with pastries and beverages available throughout the two-and-a-half days. There's food and fun galore. If you have never attended the opening night Meet & Greet, please do so. You will be amazed! And my final thought – this is EVERYONE'S conference. I encourage your participation; help make it the best it can be.



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.



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