

Sustaining Kansas communities: RWDs construct new facilities

Water systems go through periods of changes to improve services for their customers. Typically the improvements come in the form of adding new customers, increasing line sizes, updating control systems, adding storage capacity, or replacing pump stations with new plumbing and pumps. But as systems grow, so do their needs to pull business operations into a centralized location. As examples, two rural water districts recently completed construction on new office buildings. These are Brown RWD 1 in northeast Kansas and Washington RWD 1 in north-central Kansas.

But as systems grow, so do their needs to pull business operations into a centralized location.

Manager and operator Darrell Schlabach has already repaired 71 leaks in 2005.

plan includes a business office, manager's office, board meeting room, storage space, shop room

Greg Duryea
Tech Assistant

New facility did more than consolidate



Washington RWD 1's new office is located in Hanover, Kansas. The district used a local planner to design a floor plan and local contractor expertise to build a 75-foot by 60-foot building. The new office and shop combination houses the main business office for the district where Ellen Pralle, bookkeeper, conducts daily business for a 625 plus customer district. She fields calls from customers with questions ranging from their water bills, water leaks or how to obtain service. The district has been plagued since original construction in the mid-1970's by shoddy installation of solvent weld 1 1/2-inch PVC pipeline.



The new office for Brown RWD 1 is located on the south side of US Highway 36 in Fairview, Kan. The stone markers in the front yard add a nice touch to the office.

Prior to having the new office and shop in Hanover, Washington RWD 1 operated an office at Ellen's residence. It was in an old wash house – sometimes referred to as a 'summer kitchen' – that had been converted for district use after installation of heating and air conditioning. Supplies for the district were stored in Schlabach's basement and garage as well as in another storage building north of town.



The new office for Washington RWD 1 located on main street in Hanover, Kan. makes a nice addition to downtown. The 75-foot by 60-foot building houses the main office, board meeting room, storage shop and maintenance shop.

Washington RWD 1 used the services of Jerry Heuer, Hanover, who donated time and skills to design the new building. The floor

and small basement. Overhead storage above the offices and meeting room provides needed extra space.



Ellen Pralle, district bookkeeper, enjoys the spacious office. Previously, the office was located at her home. She and her family are glad to have the additional house space available with the office now in Hanover.

Local contractors were awarded contracts for the building's concrete and framing. District employees Don Martin, Jeff Schlabach and Darrell Schlabach completed most of the wiring and finish work in the building.

After the project was complete and supplies moved in, district personnel discovered they had double the inventory on some items and in other cases, triple! Darrell and Ellen both said, "When you have supplies scattered throughout several locations, knowing exactly what is on hand is difficult at best." Typically when supplies were needed Darrell did the ordering and took delivery of the items. Ellen presented the bills to the board for payment, but would not necessarily know that all items were received. Now inventory is much easier to maintain and keep track of. The district still maintains some supply storage north of town to allow for less travel time in case additional parts are needed for repairs.

One of the best benefits of building the new office and storage facility turned out to be



Don Martin, operator and Darrell Schlabach, manager of Washington RWD 1, review district maps. Having information in one location is greatly appreciated by employees.

Pipe and other inventory stored in the new shop are easily located when needed for new extensions or in case of emergencies. When inventory was moved to the new shop, district personnel discovered they had double the inventory on some items and in other cases, triple! The pipe in the photo is stored on older scaffolding purchased from federal surplus. Also, most of the shop tools and benches were obtained from federal surplus.

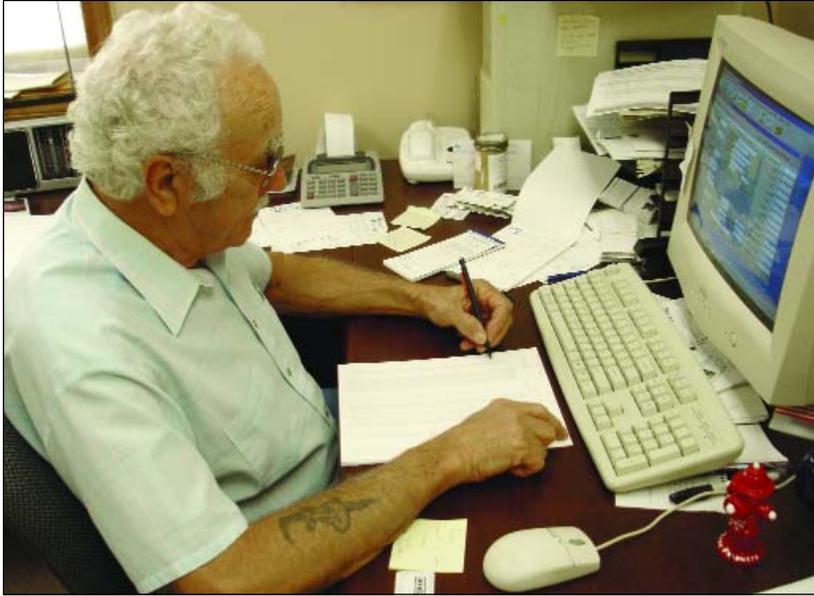


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Paul Reynolds, manager of Brown RWD 1, checks a computer printout of customer information. Before the new building was constructed, Paul maintained the district's records and billing from his residence.

improved employee communication. Although Darrell and Ellen communicated regularly about what was happening in the district, or of recently reported problems, having a central office allowed both to meet and discuss problems or plan the day's work schedule.

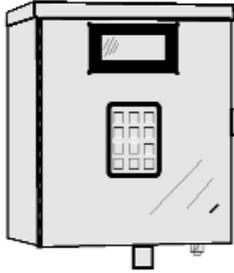
The district used reserve funds to pay for the construction. Having district employees Darrell, Don, Jeff and Ellen completing much of the interior reduced costs. Still, after all expenses were tallied, the district spent \$193,028 for the building. The facility is a testament to the dedication of staff and board.

Two new structures serve Brown County RWD 1 customers

Some 90 miles east, Brown County RWD 1 also completed construction of a new office and storage facility at Fairview. Brown RWD 1 was also constructed in the early 70's. Originally the district provided water service to 268 customers but has since grown to 400 customers with approximately 100 miles of pipeline. The water supply is from six wells located north of Fairview; there is also an interconnect with the city of Hiawatha as a supplemental supply.

The seven-member board of directors and district personnel designed the new office and storage facility. They decided on a 30 x 50 foot structure including a 30 x 30 foot shop with office and board room making up the remainder of the space. Local contractors were used to build the facility with J.D. Dempewolf selected as general contractor. The complete cost for the striking new building was less than \$60,000.

Paul Reynolds, manager, also does billing and Ron McPherson serves as the operator. Paul has been with the district since its inception, working as the inspector for the district when it was being installed back in 1975. "Of the district's original board members, only three are still living. They are Dale Lance, Dale Bosse and Larry Fund," Paul explained. "Those directors are particularly pleased to see the district grow and 'pay its way' into the new office." Since 1985, Paul has also taken care of the district's bookkeeping and accounting. Like many other Kansas rural water districts Brown County RWD 1's office operation and material storage was located in the manager's home. In 1989 the district moved from doing the billing by hand to a computer-



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billing program. “Without the computer-billing program the billing would have been extremely difficult at best,” Paul said. “This system works well in no small part because of excellent support and service we’ve received from Thoroughbred Systems in Topeka since 1989.”

Brown RWD 1 also recently completed construction of a new pump house. A larger building was constructed with new plumbing. The wiring and control panels were built by Elvon Van-Dalsem, owner of Van’s Electric in Fairview, Kan. The district also installed a new 75,000 KW generator to operate the pumps in case of prolonged power failure to the wells. The cost of the pump house and generator was approximately \$41,675.

True rural water

These two RWDs are ‘true’ rural water districts. They do not serve suburbanites and both districts have above average water

use per-meter, per-month because the systems provide both residential and agricultural or livestock use on homes, ranches and farms. Both systems work to sustain their communities by providing good service to rural residents. The Farmers Home Administration originally funded both districts and both districts were able to participate in the Discount Purchase Program in the late ‘80’s. Thanks to dedicated boards of directors and staff members, Washington RWD 1 and Brown RWD 1 are well positioned to serve future generations. Both systems are proud to be debt free and are enthusiastic about continued service and growth.



Brown RWD 1's new pump house north of Fairview replaces a badly deteriorated predecessor that was located at the same location. The new generator at right sits on the original pump house concrete pad.

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