Team EJP
Pennichuck
Ferguson Waterworks
Barbara Cook, PE – President, WSE
Ti-SALES
BAU/Hopkins
CorrTech Inc.
Holland Company, Inc.
Comprehensive Environmental Inc.
John Hoadley and Sons, Inc.
Kleinfelder
Green Mountain Pipeline Services
Marc Shaffer / Victaulic
Neptune Technology Group
Pare Corporation
Pure Technologies
Putnam Pipe Corp.
Stantec
Tata & Howard
Champlain Water District
Innovyze
Ed Quann, FRMA
John Downey, MAWEA

David F. Sullivan & Associates
Environmental Partners Group, Inc.
Fuss & O’Neill, Inc.
Corona Environmental Consulting
Maher Services, Inc.
Mueller Company
Tony Lastowski
U.S. Pipe
Wright-Pierce
Aqua Solutions, Inc.
Aquarion Water Co
Aquila & Neptun Enterprises, LLC
AutomaTech Inc.
Bedford MA Water Division
Bob Mack
Complete Control Services Inc.
Dan McGuire / Ramstrup Water Metering
Don Provencher
Dr. James Malley
Ecosystem Consulting Service, Inc.
Eric Muench / AECOM
Harper Haines Fluid Control Inc.
GeoInsight

Industrial Pump Sales & Service
King Gage Engineering
Larry Murphy
Lynnfield Water District
M.A. Selmon Company
Mark Lueders / Carl Lueders & Company
Master Leak Technologies, LLC
NH Water Works Association
Portsmouth Water and Fire District
R.H. White Construction Co., Inc.
Resilient Civil Engineering, P.C.
Rick Shriver / HARCO Fittings
Suez / Louis Iudiciani
Tighe & Bond
Underground Testing & Services
Underwood Engineers
Anonymous
President's Message D by Barbara Cook

And Now for Something Completely Different... The Enneagram, a Personality Tool

I wanted to share knowledge that is different than the type of knowledge/news we are currently getting on a daily basis, to help get our minds off of this craziness that we are all living. I know there are a lot of personality tools available, but I'm most familiar with the Enneagram. I don't know the specific age recommendations for this tool, but I would imagine that it would be acceptable for teenagers and older. The Enneagram model defines nine personality types, as summarized below:

1. Reformor-conscientious, perfectionistic, self-controlled, rule-follower, and ethical.
2. Helper—wants to be liked and belong, friendly, empathetic, and people-pleasing.
3. Achiever—wants to be successful, goal-oriented, driven, and conscious of their public image.
4. Individualist—wants to be unique, intense, authentic, and in tune with their own emotions.
5. Investigator—discerning, private, innovative, and more comfortable with data than people.
7. Enthusiast—adventurous, optimistic, outgoing, easily distracted, spontaneous, and adaptable.
8. Challenger—stand up for their beliefs, strong-minded, self-confident, aggressive, and decisive.
9. Peacemaker—Patient, supportive, self-conscious, compliant, and lets others take the lead.

Each of us have some proportion of these nine personality types and there is not one personality type that is better or worse than another. All of these personality types have healthy, average, and unhealthy aspects. The trick is to learn how to keep yourself living on the healthy side of any of these personality types.

So why do we care about our personality type and the personality types of others that are close to us? For me, the answer is personal growth: to understand what motivates me and others that I live, work, and play with better. Some may say that these personality tools are just used to manipulate people. It is true, that these personality tools can be used for unhealthy reasons, but hopefully this is rare, at least I would hope so in our profession.

In addition to personal growth, I find information on personality types very interesting. Without a lot of effort or cost you can purchase the reference, Discovering Your Personality Type, by Don Richard Riso and Russ Hudson for less than $11. There is a questionnaire in the book to help you determine your personality type, so it is better to purchase the paperback to make taking the questionnaire easier. There is a chapter on each personality type, so there is no need to read the whole book, just the chapters with personality types you are interested in. For each personality type, the authors detail the healthy, average, and unhealthy characteristics of each type, key motivations, examples of well-known people, as well as helpful hints to steer you to the healthy side of each personality type.

The Enneagram has been used as a personality tool for many years and there are numerous references, websites, and applications that you can try out for free. Most of the free tools give you snippets of knowledge and then as you read further, request payment for additional information. You might want to try out one of these free tools to see if you are interested before purchasing the reference by Riso and Hudson.

If you have quipped your interest, you may be asking, “So, Barbara, what is your Enneagram personality type?” My two predominant personality types are peacemaker and challenger. Peacemaker is my most predominant type. When I first took the questionnaire and determined my results, my reaction was, this is whacked! However, after I started reading further, it made a lot of sense to me. In my healthy state, I am patient, self-conscious, a good mediator, resourceful, self-sufficient, and self-confident. In my average or unhealthy state I avoid conflict, am disengaged, and controlling. I hope you took my mind off of COVID-19 for at least a few minutes. If this didn’t help, my other advice is to GO TAKE A HIKE, GET OUTDOORS, and of course stay safe!}

In April 2020, NEWWA drafted an op-ed that it issued to all the daily and weekly newspapers across New England. It was picked up by multiple news outlets, and we wanted to share with you below:

Saluting the Forgotten Heroes of the Pandemic Drinking Water and Wastewater Professionals Keep Society Functioning

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a global shift in how we function as a society. From quarantine orders, to face masks, to social distancing, we are all getting used to the “new normal.”

However, two sectors, quietly working in the background, almost invisible to the public, but who are the basis for HOW we can continue to function as a society, are water and wastewater.

Healthcare workers, hospitals, grocery stores, and restaurants—cornersstones to protecting public health and continuing to provide the essentials needed to get through the quarantine in our homes—would all crumble if water and wastewater services came to a halt.

No water to wash hands or shower with? Sanitize equipment? Clean floors? Cook with? Wash dishes? Think of the current state of the world, and then imagine it with no wastewater services.

Can’t flush a toilet? Drains no longer work? Can’t shower? Do laundry? Think of the current state of the world, and then imagine it with no wastewater services.

On March 27, 2020, The U.S. EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler sent a letter to Governors in all 50 states, territories, and Washington, DC, requesting that water and wastewater workers, as well as the manufacturers and suppliers who provide essential services and materials to the water sector, be considered essential workers and businesses by state authorities when enacting restrictions to curb the spread of COVID-19.

In addition, water and wastewater professionals are considered first responders by the Department of Homeland Security, meaning they are critical to helping protect public health and continuing to provide the essentials needed to get through the quarantine in our homes—would all crumble if water and wastewater services came to a halt.

So the next time you turn on your faucet, or flush your toilet, think of and thank the highly trained, licensed, dedicated, and humble water and wastewater operators (i.e., heroes) who are still working to ensure the lifeblood of our communities continues to flow—in both directions.

Kirsten King
Executive Director
New England Water Works Association
Some important considerations for crafting lists include:

- About 70 percent of bulleted lists are noticed by web visitors.
- Lists draw in the reader’s eye and make skimming easier.
- Strategies and Tactics.

One of Wylie’s major strategies for improving online communication is using lists when preparing content, which she explains in a recent issue of the Public Relations Society of America’s Strategies and Tactics. “Readers can’t resist a list,” according to Wylie.

Lists draw in the reader’s eye and make skimming easier. About 70 percent of bulleted lists are noticed by web visitors. Lists are easier to read and scan than paragraphs.

Some important considerations for crafting lists include:

- Combine a series of three or more items in a sentence, paragraph, or passage into a list.
- Use a logical structure: alphabetical for glossaries, chronological for a series of steps, and hierarchical for topic lists.
- Select the first and last items in the list strategically. In terms of reader attention, the first gets the most, the middle gets the least, and the final gets somewhere in the middle. Save the best for the first and last items in the list.
- Use boldface type at the beginning to attract “flippers” and “skimmers.”
- Add a heading above the list to identify the subject.
- Start each item with a strong, specific verb to identify a desired action, if applicable. See the “examples” portion of the next section.
- Use “parallel structure” (the same grammatical construction) when writing each bulleted item in a list to improve readability. For example: “Press the start button. Set the power dial. Activate the system monitor.”
- Don’t overdue bullet points. You risk overwhelming the reader and obscuring the main message.
- Don’t “under-use” bullet points. It takes three items to make a list.
- Future “PR Perspectives” columns will focus on other aspects of online communication.

For comments or suggestions for future columns, please contact Kirsten King at kking@newwa.org.

New Members — March, April, and May — Welcome!

City of Danbury – Public Utilities City of Burlington, VT

Alina Dess
Mavee Dineen

Christopher Gardner
Kyle Grabowski
Jim Holland
Brandon Hooper
Rick Kelly
Teresa Lama
Phil Laramie
Richard Meskill
Jesse Morin
Kris Munson
Chris Pelleiter
Jordan Provencher

Evelyn Ramos
Cameron Rapoport
Stephanie Salerno
Travis Sheldon
Charles Spellman
James Starbard
Colin Stokes
Ben Trottier
Jeremy Weeks
Bo Zhang

Check out our Facebook, Follow us on Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram

Member Spotlight: Joseph Duncan, PE

General Manager – Champlain Water District South Burlington, VT

Joe Duncan serves as general manager of Champlain Water District (CWD), headquartered in South Burlington, Vermont. He was previously the utility’s chief engineer, leading projects related to the design, construction, and maintenance of water system facilities. Prior to joining CWD, Joe spent 18 years as a consulting engineer with Aldrich + Elliott, formerly Forcier Aldrich & Associates. Joe earned a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering from the University of Vermont and a master’s in environmental engineering from Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

Joe is an active member of the NEWWA University Outreach Committee, volunteering his time to set up career panels for Vermont-based students. He is also a member of the NEWWA Networking Committee and Distribution & Storage Committee. Joe enjoys hiking in Vermont with his family and, when able to, traveling the U.S. with his wife to visit his three kids in college in Minnesota, Virginia, and Louisiana.

How did you get connected with NEWWA?

After working for 2 years doing mostly geotechnical engineering for Haley + Aldrich, I went back to school at WPI as a full-time graduate student, focusing on water resources. While I was there, I took a hydraulic modeling course and Mark Wetzel came in as a guest speaker. That was my first introduction to a NEWWA member, with Mark being chair of the Information Technology Committee. I was looking for a job where I was in school, so I talked to Mark afterwards. Mark and the Information Technology Committee were putting together a NEWWA CADD course, so I helped with that and ended up working with Mark at Dufresne Henry for 2 years while in school.

You are in the first year of your new position as CWD General Manager. What have you learned so far?

I moved into this role in July 2019, following Jim Fay’s retirement as general manager. Coming from the engineering side, you’re used to dealing with numbers and solving more technical problems. As general manager, the role is more business and you realize how big the management component is. The main focus is on the people, which I like.

At the end of March the engineering and finance staff began working from home. We put cleaning protocols in place. We moved to having half a crew on for 3 days, then the other half for 2 days. Crew members at home are on standby, available for an emergency. With reduced staffing, crews stay close to the plant with little time in the field. It was okay when everything was shut down, but as Vermont opens up for construction we are starting to get a lot of requests for activity in the field. We have our staff so focused normally on being proactive and being ahead of things, so the bigger complaint is we are falling behind on maintenance now. We are developing re-integration plans to get all of our crews back at the plant. It will include staggered shifts to help with physical separation while allowing staff to get back to work throughout the system.

How has CWD’s membership and involvement in the Partnership for Safe Water program influenced your response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

The partnership drives non-compliance, so in general we are constantly doing emergency planning and drills. Prior to the pandemic, the focus had been on what happens if we lose power, if the system is wiped out, since the program focus is on optimizing water system operations. For the COVID-19 response, the mechanics are slightly different, but a lot of the concepts are still the same. The partnership encourages organizations to avoid thinking stuff isn’t going to happen. You need to be ready when it does happen.

NEWWA Staff Directory

Executive Director Kirsten King, PE
Deputy Executive Director Don Bunker, PE
Accounting Manager Pam Amalfi
Backflow Prevention & Cross Connection Control Coordinator Nelson Cabral

Events & Marketing Manager Claire C’DeBaca
Publications Coordinator Jacqui Campana
Materials Preparation Assistant Lisa Franks
Registrar Mary Keating

Accounting Clerk Mary Quigley
Membership & Volunteer Coordinator Mary Quigley
Programs & Technical Support Paul Rendeau
Facility and Office Manager Linda Smith
NEWWA would like to bring special attention to the companies and members who so generously contributed either all or part of their Spring Conference registration/booth fees back to the association. Their generosity has greatly assisted NEWWA during this unprecedented and difficult time and will help with allowing NEWWA to continue to serve its membership in the capacity you all expect.
Executive Director’s Message

By Kirsten King

Upon the second cancellation of our Spring Conference, I drafted the below note to thank those who assist us from year to year. I wanted to share with all members to make you aware of what a wonderful group of peers you have as fellow NEWWA members. In addition, to those of you who donated to NEWWA following the conference cancellation — we truly cannot thank you enough for your support.

Dear NEWWA members, exhibitors, and supporters:

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, uncertainty regarding when large gatherings will be “safe” again, and ultimate concern for the health and safety for all our attendees, NEWWA’s staff and board are saddened to report that we have made the difficult decision to cancel the rescheduled Spring Joint Regional Conference and Exhibition from June 22-23, 2020 at the DCU Center in Worcester, Mass.

I would personally like to bring attention to and thank the following for their tireless work and efforts into making this show happen. We are truly heartbroken that the entire water works family from across New England will not get the opportunity to come together this year like we have for 20+ years at the DCU Center and countless years before that in Marlboro and other locations.

• Program Committee – Run by Chair Kevin Flood - without them, the technical program — this year more than 100 speakers were scheduled to present in 18 concurrent sessions over 2 days —would not have happened. The level of effort put forth by this committee in particular is second to none. They meet monthly to discuss programs on track, on time and schedule, and organized.

• Hydrant Hysteria Committee – Run by Chair Demetri Vidalis - from organizing teams, to vetting rules, obtaining sponsors, and running a top-notch event, this committee has heightened operator involvement in the association and allows not one, but two teams to represent NEWWA at AWWA ACE. Unfortunately this competition will not run this year due to the cancellation of ACE20 in Orlando, which was also scheduled for June.

• Student Activities Committee – Run by Chair Dr. Ken Lee, he organizes the student poster session, which allows undergraduate as well as graduate students to showcase their projects to interested attendees and potential employers.

• Young Professionals Committee – Run by Chair Will Wight, the VP of the Committee helps to organize the Wednesday morning YP Meet & Greet Breakfast, which helps break the ice for newcomers to the association and permits, allows for networking, and is a great way for people to ease into the conference for the next 2 days. This event has grown exponentially over the years and now attracts well over 100+ participants.

• Our vendors – more than 200 of you attend each year, many of you consistently for as long as we can remember. Thank you for your loyalty.

• Our sponsors – we had more sponsors scheduled this year than we have ever had, and were so excited to showcase your partnership with us. We will work to try and provide you recognition throughout the rest of the year.

• Our attendees – we were looking forward to seeing you all again, from registration through the exhibit hall and the technical sessions. We will have to wait one more year to see if you enjoy the change of Wednesday afternoons reception to the exhibit hall and the new diversity breakfast and panel on Thursday morning.

• Our volunteers – from assisting at registration with pulling badges for attendees to scanning badges in and out of technical sessions — your assistance helps the staff tremendously over these two busy 2 days.

• Staff – without the NEWWA staff, this event would not exist. The level of planning that goes into the Spring Conference is extensive, each staff member plays a role in its planning and execution. I’d like to give special thanks to Katelyn Todesco, our Events and Marketing Manager, who is the lifeblood of the show, as well as staff members Claire O’Dell, Mary Keating, Mary Queigue, Jacqui Campana, Lisa Franks, Paul Riendeau, Don Bunker, Linda Smith, Pam Amalfi, and Nelson Cabral, who all also play integral roles in the conference’s planning and final execution.

Save the date for March 31-April 1, 2021, where we plan to wait one more year to see if you enjoy the new format for our conference and the full NEWWA experience.

I hope everyone remains safe, level headed, healthy, and prepared as this pandemic continues to evolve. Thank you again to everyone for your continued support and dedication to NEWWA and we look forward to welcoming you to our next event for networking, learning, camaraderie, and most importantly, FUN!  

— Kirsten

For full updates on COVID-19 and NEWWA’s operations, please visit newwa.org

These are Parlous Times

By George R. Allan

Indeed, these are “parlous” times. Parlous is an old English variant of the word “parley.” The first time I came across this word was when it was used by my friend Jim Matera, a former Editor of the Journal of NEWWA (1964-87). I use it at this time to convey to what we are all currently living through. The COVID-19 pandemic is something that we have not experienced in our lifetime. It has affected our health and social and economic well being. We have seen conferences, training, meetings and work assignments cancelled or postponed.

The challenges facing water suppliers have included:

• Compliance with OSHA requirements
• Supply chain disruptions for chemicals, materials, PPE, etc.
• Ability to maintain operations (meter readings, sampling, construction, etc)
• Health of staff
• Budgets

While the medical community understands the virus that caused the current pandemic, that was not the case in the mid-19th century when waterborne pandemics occurred regularly. Cholera was the most common and deadly disease with three outbreaks in the U.S. from 1832-1854, for example, an outbreak in Chicago killed about 5 percent of the population (24,000 people). Cholera is essentially non-existent now in the U.S. but still exists in parts of Asia, Latin America, and Africa.

Cholera is a devastating disease. People die quickly once contracting it as it spreads quickly through the population with a fatality rate of up to 50 percent. It is easily treated by fluids and electrolytes. The most common cause of the disease is the bacterium Vibrio cholerae in water or food contaminated by feces. However, in the mid-1800s, cholera was thought to be caused by contaminants in the air. Medical concerns at the time was that people living in congested, squallid areas were the most susceptible to the disease because of noxious air pollution and the stench from overflowing privy “safe” cesspools.

One of the transformative events in understanding and controlling cholera occurred in London in 1854 where 10,000 people succumbed to the disease. Unlike his contemporaries, a doctor named John Snow didn’t believe the prevailing theory that cholera was caused by air pollution. He questioned why occupants of one building in a neighborhood would be affected but those in a nearby building in the same area were not affected if the disease was indeed caused by the air.

Snow decided to look at the water supply as the cause of the cholera outbreak. In the 1850s, London was served by a haphazard water system consisting of urban wells and withdrawals from the Thames River. Some of the river intakes were located downstream of discharges from the city’s sewers. The water systems were run by several competing private water companies.

Snow’s investigation included a study of maps of the city’s individual water distribution systems with the goal to determine that an urban well on Broad Street served buildings that had an outbreak of cholera. A neighboring block of homes, however, did not have any irritation and was served by a different water company with a different source of water.

As Snow studied the water from the Broad Street well, he couldn’t detect anything under his microscope. The only distinguishing factor was the smell, or more accurately, the stench of the water. He continued his detective work and traced the source of the odor to an overflowing nearby cesspool.

After much effort and persuasion, he was able to get local officials to shut down the Broad Street well pump. In spite of his initial success, Snow still had a difficult time convincing the public health officials and the medical community that cholera was a water-borne disease.

Cholera outbreaks occurred in many counties over the next few years. Eventually London made improvements to its water and sewer systems, including discharging the sewage from a sewer to the water intakes. In 1866 when there was another outbreak of cholera, the death toll was much smaller and was confined to an area where water and sewer improvements had not been completed.

The current pandemic reminds us of the importance of good public health practices and policies. Water supply and wastewater employees have been essential workers in the battle to control the spread of COVID-19. Water suppliers have always had an important role in public health. Indeed, if you read the NEWWA Mission Statement, it begins: “Our mission is to promote public health...”
Technology Assists in the Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

By Mark Wetzel, P.E., Chair of the Information Technology Committee & DPW Superintendent, Town of Ayer, MA

Technology has become a major tool assisting water suppliers and other public works utilities in maintaining essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most water and wastewater utilities developed detailed emergency response plans as a result of the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002, requiring water systems to prepare a comprehensive emergency response plan. Most of these plans were focused on terrorism, water contamination, and natural disasters. While staffing during an emergency was an important part of the plan, the use of technology was a significant component. During this unprecedented pandemic, emergency technology has been critical to providing water and wastewater services while protecting our staff’s health.

As a relatively small public works department, providing water and wastewater services to a community of 8,000, Ayer’s use of technology has been vital to maintaining social distancing and working remotely while managing our operations.

Web-Based Work Order Management System - Ayer uses a work order management system to communicate work tasks, Dig Safe mark-outs, and inspections. This allows the staff to receive, monitor, prioritize, execute, and track their work tasks on mobile devices (smart phones and tablets) without interacting with the office staff and public.

Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) - Water and wastewater SCADA systems have been in use in Ayer for more than 20 years. These systems have evolved to allow staff to remotely monitor operations, review and respond to chemical alarms, and make operational changes. The technology allows us to use the SCADA system with both laptop computers and mobile devices.

Automated Meter Reading (AMR) System - The radio read AMR water meter system has allowed Ayer to continue reading meters and billing without any customer and office staff contact. Maintaining revenues during the stay-at-home order is critical to our operations and this system allows the business staff to continue billing for water and sewer while working from home.

Virtual Private Network (VPN) - While most businesses use a VPN to allow remote access to the network, many municipalities have not seen the need. As part of the Ayer DPW pandemic operations plan, we set up a VPN to allow the administration and engineering staff to work from home and access files and data.

Zoom Meetings - Online meetings are relatively new phenomena for many small water and wastewater operations. This technology is easy to set up and use. Online meetings have been critical to maintaining communications with staff, vendors, consultants, regulators, and town officials during the pandemic. Ayer’s operators are able to continue their required training. NEWWA and MWUA’s regular online meetings with MassDEP and EPA have been critical to our operations.

Online permitting and payment - Ayer uses online permitting and payment systems on the town webpage for short-term and road opening permits, connection permits, and water and sewer payments. This technology eliminates the need for face-to-face interaction while still allowing for issuing permits and receiving payments while staff is working from home.

As water systems begin to update their Emergency Response Plans in accordance with AWWA 2018, technology will be a critical component for monitoring, communicating, responding, and reporting for many of the emergencies that we need to prepare for, including technology to support water and wastewater tasks. This current emergency has demonstrated the value of understanding available technology and how to use it to maintain our essential water and wastewater service to the community.

What a difference a few months has made in our world. As we started 2020 the economy was hitting on all cylinders, and one primary challenge for businesses was to find additional employees. Water utilities were busy fulfilling the role to provide safe and abundant water supply to customers. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, new challenges were presented as we learned the growth of the virus, to treat those afflicted, and to protect human life. Every facet of our existence is most certainly including water supply, treatment, and distribution.

AWWA and NEWWA have responded directly to the crisis. AWWA immediately turned its focus to providing resources and guidance to water utilities through its Public Affairs Advisors providing early information directly from EPA and CDC relative to drinking water and the virus. Webinars were conducted to outline changes necessary to conduct operations while protecting operations staff. Both AWWA and NEWWA have established Coronavirus resource pages on their websites. The reality of the pandemic has required that drastic changes be made to meet the mission of water utilities and continue to serve the public.

In addressing the schedule of association activities, AWWA evaluated each planned event including section meetings, specialty conferences, the annual Washington D.C. “Fly-in,” and the Annual Conference and Exposition (ACE) planned for June. As stay-at-home directives were issued, it became increasingly clear that in-person conferences and events were not practical. One of the most difficult realizations was the necessity to cancel this year’s ACE. AWWA President Jim Williams called a special meeting of the Board of Directors on April 9th to address the decision for ACE. He said that as the Executive Committee and staff leaders invested much time in deliberating the decision, he referred to AWWA’s primary mission, to protect public health. With the continued efforts presented by coronavirus, we had no choice but to cancel ACE. With that the association now focuses on continuing its mission and providing valuable guidance for water utilities.

To gauge the scope of impact on water utilities, AWWA conducted a comprehensive survey, to identify challenges, outline best practices, and determine modifications necessary to keep utility operations running.

The AWWA survey results key takeaways are:

• Most utilities are implementing CDC guidance for essential workers with 58 percent incorporating social distancing and increased disinfecting of workspaces and 78 percent are providing face coverings.
• 56 percent of utilities indicate they are currently seeing supply chain issues for PPE.
• Nearly 75 percent of utilities say they are currently or anticipating reductions in revenue.
• Over 40 percent of utilities anticipating revenue generation issues predict that it is likely to impact their ability to maintain current levels of service.
• About 40 percent of utilities have reduced maintenance/repair schedules and 30 percent are delaying capital construction.
• Almost 30 percent of service providers are already seeing revenue loss with another 50 percent expecting soon.
• 90 percent of surveyed utilities were taking steps to assist customers affected by COVID-19 by suspending service shut-offs.

The survey also confirmed that a very high percentage of water utilities were successfully communicating with their customers offering assurance of the safety of public drinking water, and importantly to emphasize appreciation for the work of local water utility operations personnel.

As the stay-at-home advisories are lifted and businesses are re-opened, AWWA and NEWWA are adjusting to new needs and challenges. Both organizations are providing valuable tools and support for water utilities as well as all sectors of our water market.

The coordinated resources and information from EPA and CDC have been proactive in communicating with their customers offering assurance of the safety of public drinking water, and importantly to emphasize appreciation for the work of local water utility operations personnel.

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News from AWWA

By Chris Hodgson, AWWA Section Director

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NEWWA Online Training – We’ve Gone Virtual!

Standing by its commitment to provide training to water works professionals, NEWWA continues to offer training courses for credit during the COVID-19 pandemic. NEWWA staff and instructors have designed and now run quality online courses that have been approved by each New England state certification board for credit hours.

When states began issuing stay-at-home orders in March, NEWWA’s 6- and 12-week concepts and practices courses for both distribution and treatment operator exams were mere weeks in progress. These multi-week programs are needed by water operators in order to pass operator certification exams, which in many cases are required for an operator’s job classification and are key to career advancement.

“If we did nothing, we would have left them out to dry,” said Don Bunker, NEWWA’s deputy executive director. All NEWWA courses were suspended on March 16, 2020. At the time, there were approximately 200 students enrolled in operator certification courses, so NEWWA’s priority became figuring out how to get students back in class.

NEWWA training team, consisting of Don Bunker, Paul Riendeau, and adjunct faculty member Bob Hoyt got to work evaluating how these essential operator certification courses could happen online—this would be new territory for the association, having never held an online course for credit before. NEWWA instructors Paul Riendeau and Don Bunker ensured the course content could be delivered online and set up a schedule for learning assessments. NEWWA chose Zoom as the video conference platform based on its user friendly interface and the ability to host dozens of students. NEWWA instructor Bob Hoyt would teach from his home and Don would serve as remote tech support while Paul coordinated learning assessments. NEWWA purchased a wide-angle webcam, wireless headsets, and a laptop with a touch screen so Bob could annotate or do math on the screen. NEWWA’s Registrar Mary Keating worked hard to contact all of the enrolled students and confirm their willingness to continue with the course online or defer their enrollment to a future course.

The move to the virtual classroom was going to be a big change for both students and instructors. Paul said he has taught class in front of one or two students before, but he has never taught to an empty room.

Before starting the first online course, Don Bunker offered a Zoom test session to give students the chance to become familiar with Zoom and practice logging in, using the mute and video functions, and try out the chat feature for asking questions. Three weeks after the training center closed, the training team launched NEWWA’s first online course, hosting the Basic Drinking Water Operator Exam Preparation – Treatment Grade T1 over Zoom on April 2, 2020.

Each NEWWA online session lasts about 3 hours with intermissions. While Bob is primarily lecturing for the duration of the session, Don monitors the chat sidebar for questions and runs hypothetical questions by Bob to keep the course energy up.

“Sometimes the chat box is very active and we get a lot of interaction,” said Don. “Bob is like the play-by-play broadcaster, and I am the color commentator.” NEWWA moved all of its operator certification courses online and of the approximate 200 students enrolled before the training center shutdown, 105 students continued their training online. NEWWA staff is pleased with this turnout and the renewed interest in NEWWA’s half-day courses, which made their online debut in early May.

As for the future of online training, the plan is to focus on delivering half-day courses or delivering what would be full-day courses, now broken up into half-day sessions. NEWWA will plan to make up for some canceled spring courses and run them in the fall. One of the challenges moving forward is how to adapt courses that are typically hands on and make them online friendly. For the multi-week courses, NEWWA may continue to offer the online session as an option even after NEWWA is allowed to run in-person sessions again to ensure students have access to training. NEWWA’s training staff thanks all students who were affected by the sudden closures due to COVID-19 for their patience, cooperation, and support in transitioning to online. NEWWA looks forward to continuing to offer online options in the future and to welcoming students back to in-person training courses once we are able to do so again.

NEWWA instructor Bob Hoyt leads on online course from his living room.