

Tell Them How Important Water and Wastewater Service Is

Shaun Fielder, Executive Director

As I prepare this article just following Thanksgiving, there is not a decision or plan in place to prevent the austerity measures for the country, referred to as the fiscal cliff, from automatically taking effect January 1, 2013. I am sure many of you agree that something needs to be done now to control our costs and protect the assets of this great nation. The final approach will impact all of us.

It is very intriguing to be observing our nation's current fiscal challenges and then thinking about the "needs" of the water sector industry. My definition of needs isn't wish list items but for investments that continue to be needed. To support these investments I have commented often it is imperative the water sector implement and use a full cost pricing approach. Remember we are in business to run in the black on an ongoing basis. It is important all of us continue to speak up for the investments our systems need to insure the long term economic strength of our given communities. A primary point is a 'no' decision on your identified priority investments and upgrade requests will negatively impact the level of

(Continued on page 7)

NRWA, 37 Years of Water Service Assistance

Ed Savage, VRWA President

As VRWA celebrates its 30th year of providing service to the water sector in Vermont, National Rural Water Association celebrates its 37th year of service to the water & wastewater utilities in the United States. 2013 will be a great testament to the strength of the organization. The strong will and determination of the people involved in operations on a day-to-day basis has survived the test of time. And the determination to keep the organization going strong is obvious whenever you are around "Rural Water" people.

The basic mission has always been the same. We provide training and technical assistance to rural water and wastewater utilities. The money that makes this work comes from the Federal Government. Our services are provided mostly free of charge to the utilities and they are encouraged to become a member of their state organization. In order to continue this mode of operation, it is imperative to make sure that all aspects of the operation are in top-notch readiness. This readiness includes all the staff at all levels. We keep a full-time staff in the National office in Duncan, Oklahoma and a full time staff and presence in Washington, DC. We also have affiliates in all fifty states and the offices and staff in all the affiliates are a full-time operation.

Our keys to success are very basic.

We give the best "bang for the buck" of all the organizations that are doing the same type of work. Our Circuit riders and Technical Assistants are grassroots personnel. We go to the utilities and work side by side with the operators to make sure that they have the level of service that will get them through the specific struggles that they need the help with.

The knowledge and physical assistance we provide needs to be up-to-date at all times. We make sure that all of our staff is trained and properly equipped with the right tools to provide timely and professional service. The only way to make this work is to continually monitor and have input into the regulatory workings at the Federal and State levels. All of this takes a lot of time and money. NRWA and VRWA strive to put all the right people in the right positions at the right time. This has made us who we are and who we will continue to be.

As long as we keep the service level at its current status, we will continue to enjoy the fruits of our labor. When everyone is happy from the taxpayer to the recipient of the aid, it is a labor of love for everyone in the NRWA and VRWA. We look forward to serving you for another thirty years and more! ●

Who We Are

Since 1982, Vermont Rural Water Association has supported water and wastewater systems across the state. We provide many services, including training, source water protection planning, and onsite assistance.

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News Leaks is the official publication of VRWA. It is published quarterly for distribution to operators, owners, managers and board members of water and wastewater systems in Vermont, as well as to association members, water and wastewater service providers, regulators, and other friends. Opinions expressed in the newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of VRWA.

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Letters

Some feedback from recent training sessions:

“Good trainer - very concise and clear.”

“Good refresher courses, always helpful.”

“I particularly valued the experience of other participants.”

“Excellent facilitation in balancing the training topics with the anecdotal conversations.”

“I feel more comfortable utilizing Vermont Rural Water as a helpful tool with some of our issues.”

“Great instructor, great location, great topic for these economic times.”

“Excellent teacher.”

“Extremely helpful. Learned new ways to solve problems.”

“Good information for daily routine and good for test preparation.”

“Very well organized.”

“Very helpful. Great handouts and taught in a very understandable way.”



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News on Tap

Liz Royer Returns to VRWA As A Water Systems Specialist

VRWA has been fortunate enough to have Liz Royer, former employee, come back on our team as a Water Systems Specialist. Liz will be providing onsite technical assistance for water systems and will be involved with some training activities as well. Her involvement with future training will complement courses led by Phil Acebo and Shaun Fielder. Liz's primary focus will be providing assistance to public water systems classified as "private" aka not eligible for rural development (RD) funding. Bear in mind those eligible for RD funding are receiving ongoing assistance from our circuit riders; Brent Desranleau, Aaron Perez, and Wayne Graham.

VRWA Preparing For Annual Rural Water Rally In February

We look forward to representing the Vermont water and wastewater sector and will once again be meeting with our Congressional delegation in February at their DC offices to advocate for continued support of rural water programs. As part of that process, we do provide copies of those commendation items we receive from various systems. These illustrate the value of our service and support. Please consider submitting a letter of support if we have helped you in 2012. Those items can be directed to Shaun Fielder, Executive Director at 20 Susie Wilson Road, Suite B, Essex Junction, VT, 05452 or emailed to sfielder@vtruralwater.org.

Nominations for Tony Torchia Award and Board of Directors

VRWA will have one seat on the Board of Directors up for election this spring. Our all-volunteer board meets quarterly to direct and oversee the association.

Directors are representatives of VRWA-member water/wastewater systems and they are elected to the board for three-year terms by the membership. Self nominations are allowed.

The Tony Torchia VRWA Special Recognition Award honors a person affiliated with the water/wastewater industry for extraordinary effort or accomplishment during the previous year or over the course of a career. All the members are invited to submit nominations.

Nominations for a board seat or the Tony Torchia Award must be received by January 31, 2013. For a nomination form, visit www.vtruralwater.org or call the office at 802-660-4988 ext 305.

VT Agency of Natural Resources ACT 138 DRAFT REPORT

Facing inadequate funding to respond to the public's demand for clean water, the Vermont Legislature passed Act 138 in 2012: http://www.vtwaterquality.org/erp/docs/erp_ACT138.pdf, which directs the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (VANR) to prepare a Water Quality Remediation, Implementation, and Funding Report (referred to as the Clean Water Trust Fund Report). The draft report investigates options to more effectively address the State's challenges to provide the public with clean water.

The public comment period is Dec. 14-Dec. 28, 2012. Please submit written or electronic comments by COB, Friday, December 28, 2012 to:

Kari Dolan, Manager
Ecosystem Restoration Program
Dept. of Environmental Conservation
Watershed Management Division
1 National Life Drive, Main 2
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Changes Coming to OSHA Hazardous Communication (Haz Com) for 2013

Phil Acebo, Training Specialist

As all of you are aware, you work with some potentially dangerous chemicals and substances: chlorine, sodium hydroxide, fluoride, and powder activated carbon to name a few, and knowing the safety and health issues associated with these are essential for safely operating our water and wastewater systems.

In light of the inherent risks connected with these materials, changes have been made that will be regulated by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) on the national level and the Vermont Occupational Safety and Health Administration (VOSHA) here in our state.

So why are changes necessary? It won't come as a surprise that the answers are safety concerns and economics—money! The use of chemicals in our daily life is a massive business that accounts for \$1.7 trillion globally. In the U.S. chemicals are a \$450 billion industry and we export to other nations in excess of \$80 billion per year. Money is a generating influence, but more important is the health and welfare of those that come in contact with chemicals in the workplace or using products made from varying chemical components.

The new system, *The Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals* (GHS) is the official title, and as the title illustrates its scope is worldwide.

So in practice, an employee in our country and one in Spain, even though they speak a different language, will be able to look at the new labeling and read the new Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) (old Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs)).

So here are just a few of the benefits:

- Enhance the protection of human health and environment by providing international system
- Fewer chemical accidents and incidents
- Reduce the need for testing and evaluation against multiple classification systems
- Improved safety for workers and others through consistent and simplified communications on chemical hazards and practices to follow for safe handling and use

With these changes on the horizon, it's the responsibility of employers to have staff trained in the new GHS system of labeling and SDS format by December 1, 2013. To expedite this, VRWA in conjunction with VOSHA will be working to provide up-to-date training on GHS. Dan Whipple, VOSHA Compliance Assistance Specialist, and I will be conducting multiple classes throughout the state to facilitate compliance. I have confirmed trainings for the first quarter of 2013 slated for Enosburgh

and Lyndonville and, as the weather warms, Dan and I will be covering the remaining areas of the state. So check our website, www.vtruralwater.org or our hard-copy training calendar for sites and times in your locale. Remember, always practice safety in the workplace and at home. ●



Contact Phil Acebo at **802-660-4988 ext. 337** or by email at pacebo@vtruralwater.org



Some Tips For Conducting Small Water System Self Audits

Aaron Perez, Water Systems Specialist

Many small water systems are alerted to leaks when a call is received from a member of the public reporting either low water pressure or water surfacing on a road way. Unmetered systems are especially vulnerable to non-reported leaks because without knowing how much water your system is both producing and using, it is unlikely small but costly leaks will be detected. So what can small systems with limited man power and resources do to insure their distribution is in good condition?

If your system is metered, it is important to take the time to not only compare your production numbers with your customers usage but to also get a good handle on other authorized but unmetered usage in the system. Often times small towns do not put meters

on water lines feeding town properties like cemeteries or recreation fields. Looking back on the previous year's usage for the same month or quarter and comparing it to current years usage after subtracting the totaled billed usage is a great way to keep an eye on these small and sometimes unnoticed lines. There are a number of water auditing software tools available on the internet ranging from free to several hundred dollars.

For systems without customer meters, the problem of checking regularly for leaks can be more difficult. Closely tracking your water production is a great place to start but without knowing what the actual consumption numbers are, other techniques can also prove helpful. Having service connections in the system with pressure gauges located in accessible places—and before pressure reducers—can give a water operator a way to check system pressure fluctuations

which can indicate problems such as leaks in the distribution system. Public education can also be a valuable tool to an operator. Educating the public about signs of water leaks such as low pressure, air in the water line and dirty water is important. A customer may not (and often times doesn't) report minimal decreases in pressure or a small amount of air in their lines.

Keeping a vigilant eye and ear out for signs of trouble can not only save a system money, but can also save an operator from having to do unplanned repairs which seem, in my experience to happen late at night, in the freezing cold or on Friday afternoons. ●



Contact Aaron Perez at **802-660-4988 ext. 331** or by email at **aperez@vtruralwater.org**

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Vermont DEC Facilities Engineering Division requests those interested in seeking funding for future pollution control projects complete preliminary application by January 31, 2013.

Municipalities interested in having a project considered for funding should complete the Funding Ranking Application. Projects are ranked by the Department to allocate available State and Federal funds. Later, municipalities with a funded project will need to fill out a loan or grant application to receive funds. Qualifying projects will be listed on the new State Fiscal Year 2014 Pollution Control Projects Priority List and Planning List for 2015 to 2018.

Funding is available for planning (preliminary engineering and final design engineering) and construction (construction engineering and construction contracts). Loans for

planning have terms of zero interest and zero administrative fee, repayment begins five years after completion of services, and repayment is over five to fifteen years depending on loan amount. Planning loans must be combined with construction loans if a project is constructed. Construction loans have terms of two percent administrative fee, repayment begins one year after completion of the project and repayment is over a period up to twenty years. State grants may be available, when funding is approved by Vermont legislature.

Please visit the FED website to download a copy of the pollution control application at <http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/fed/fed.htm>

The priority application is listed on the top right side in the what's new section as an excel download, please note it is due January 31, 2013.

Save The Date!

The Vermont Rural Water Association Annual Conference and Trade Show will be held May 1st and 2nd, 2013 at the Lake Morey Resort. Our annual golf tournament takes place on the afternoon of May 1st and the trade show, annual business meeting and training takes place May 2nd. Come early and join the fun! Registration information will be coming soon.

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*"Tell Them How Important..." continued
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service and reliability moving forward. You can't allow that situation to take effect.

There are some other strategies to insure your system sustainability for the future. One of those is to review your rate structure. Insure all fixed costs are covered and capital reserve is being included on an ongoing basis, make sure all you interact with understand the full cost of doing business. With that rate info at hand I suggest each of you continue to discuss the cost of water and wastewater service in terms of monthly fees. I do advocate for a monthly billing strategy but also recognize that isn't always practical due to resources of given systems. The monthly cost promotion approach matches with other utilities that customers are paying for on an ongoing basis. In most instances the cost of the water and wastewater service is well below the monthly costs for other items such as cable, satellite tv, electric and related.

Many challenges will still be present with our current economy even when we get this fiscal cliff issue behind us. This means it is more imperative you explain the value of service and that continued investments are needed. As the saying goes, the truth sometimes hurts and we all need to stand up and speak up to say water and wastewater service needs to be the priority. ■

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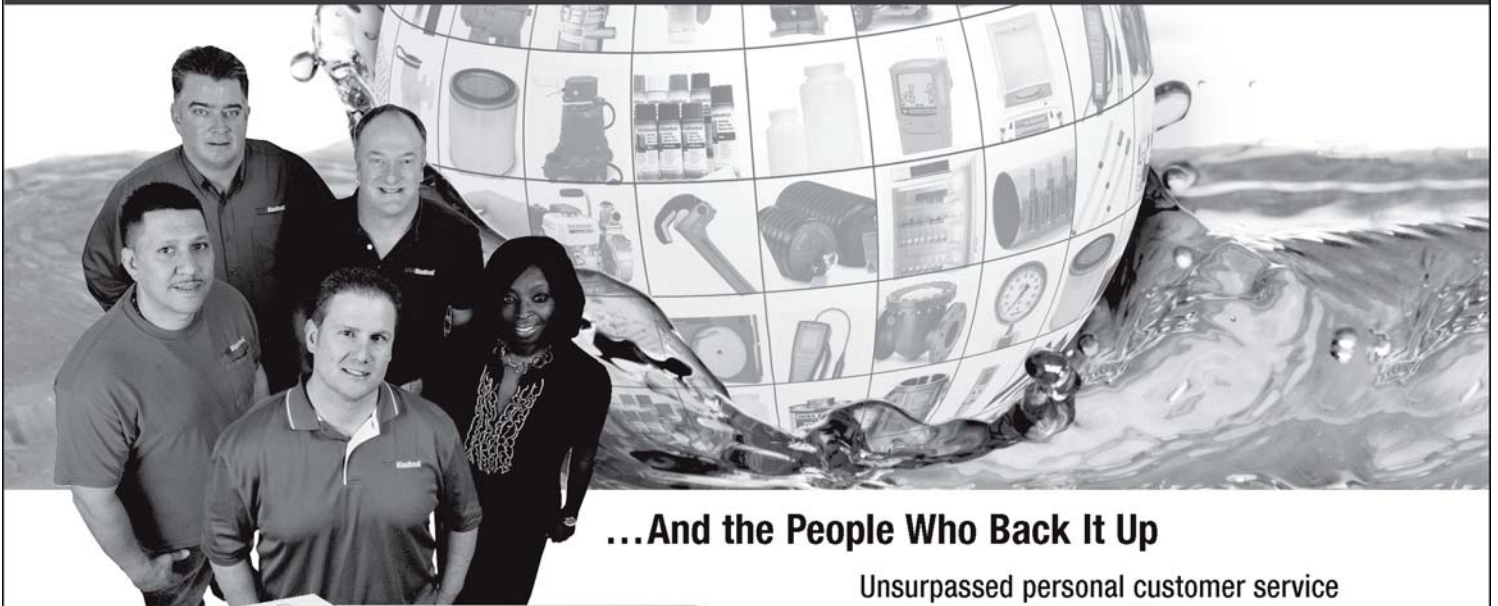


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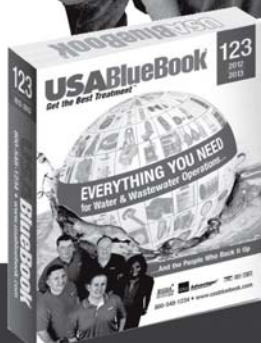


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