

NewsLEAKS

Vermont
Rural Water Association

Fall 2020



Into the Woods

Field work in
Vermont p.4

Fall Training Calendar p.6-7

The Vermont Rural Water Association provides training and support to drinking water and wastewater systems to promote healthy communities, rivers, and lakes across Vermont.

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Table of Contents

- 3 From the Executive Director
- 4-5 Field Work Photo Essay
- 6-7 Training Calendar
- 8-9 Yankee Ingenuity
- 10 Online Learning
- 11 Apprenticeship Update



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Note: this article contains inaccurate information.

For the latest updates, visit

<https://vtruralwater.org/covid-19-shutoff-moratorium/>

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Shutoff Moratoriums during the Pandemic



by Liz Royer
Executive Director

Utility shutoff moratoriums have been a national conversation since the start of the pandemic. People who have lost their jobs may have a hard time paying the water bill; at the same time, clean drinking water is important for public health and handwashing. In Vermont, the official shutoff moratorium only affects a small number of drinking water systems. We have heard that many systems around the state are doing their best to keep the water flowing to all users.

What is the shutoff moratorium for water utilities in Vermont?

The Vermont Public Utility Commission (PUC) and Department of Public Service expanded the moratorium on utility disconnections to include non-residential ratepayers and regulated water companies in late March 2020. Currently, the moratorium lasts until September 30, 2020.

This moratorium only applies to a small subset of privately-owned public community drinking water systems that are currently regulated by the Vermont Public Utility Commission. The PUC has general jurisdiction over water utilities that are not owned by users, municipalities, or fire districts. The Commission has jurisdiction over water utility rates, conditions of service, and complaints at those water companies.

Which water utilities are regulated by the Vermont Public Utility Commission?

As of March 27, 2020, the following water companies are under Commission jurisdiction: Berlin Water Co., Bolton Valley Community Water and Sewer, Bromley Water Co., Burke Mountain Water Co., Chalet Village Water System, Colonial Estates Water System, Crystal Springs Water Co., Jay Utility Co., KO's Farm, Mountain Water Co., Paul A. Austin, Pines Water Co./Conklin Marital Trust, Smugglers' Notch Water Co., The Housing Foundation, Vermont Water Utilities, Wagner Water System, Westminster Aqueduct Society, Willoughby Lake Water Works, and Woodstock Aqueduct Co.

What if I am not one of the water systems on that list?

Although your system is not subject to the official order, it is strongly encouraged by both the State of Vermont and the US EPA that you avoid customer shutoffs at this time. According to a news release from the EPA in March:

EPA...supports states and cities that have already taken proactive measures to ensure continued access to clean water for drinking and handwashing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many drinking water systems are discontinuing service cut-offs, restoring service to customers whose service was previously cut-off, and refraining from imposing penalties for nonpayment. EPA recommends widespread adoption of these practices, which provide critical support for public health.

What happens if I need to shut off a customer's water and they complain?

It is unclear what repercussions there might be if a customer complains about a shutoff by a water utility that is not regulated by the Vermont Public Utilities Commission. All utility customers are being told to contact 2-1-1 or the Consumer Affairs & Public Information (CAPI) Division of the Department of Public Service. Phone calls regarding municipal water and sewer are being forwarded from various hotlines to the Vermont Attorney General's Consumer Assistance Center and Vermont Legal Aid. VRWA reached out to both of these organizations but did not receive responses by our publication deadline.

We will provide updates on these issues through email. To join our email list, go to VTruralwater.org and click Subscribe. 💧



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A Leak in the Woods

Complicated repair is no problem for Vermont specialists



Photos and text by
Diana Butler
Source Water Specialist

A transmission line that was dug by hand over 100 years ago supplies the drinking water for Jeffersonville, Vermont. The source springs are located on a mountain near Smugglers Notch. Water flows by gravity down the transmission line through thick mountain forest. Because it was dug by hand, the water line is very shallow, even above ground in some places.

In July, Trevor Welch, operator for the Village of Jeffersonville (**VRWA System Member**) and Laramie Water Resources (**VRWA Associate Member**) performed a delicate repair on this antique infrastructure.



The spring-fed transmission line has no pump, making a live repair possible. The transmission line is shallow enough that the valve could be dug with shovels, which was fortunate: the remote location and dense forest would have made it very difficult to bring in large equipment.

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Vermont Rural Water's Paul Sestito was helping Trevor to locate and mark the transmission line when they discovered two air release valves. One of the valves, located in an extremely wet and overgrown area, had broken at the connection to the line.



Paul dug a water diversion ditch in order to better view the leaking valve.



Laramie Water Resources was able to repair the leak by removing the broken valve and installing a new corporation valve.



The group accomplished a quick repair in a difficult and remote location. Vermont water specialists are truly incredible! 💧

Training Calendar

Fall 2020

Date	Course	TCHs*	Cost (Member/Non)
Wed, Sept. 9 9 am – 10 am	Liquid Phase Odor Control	1 WW	\$6 / \$12
Thur, Sept. 10 9 am – 12:30 pm	Corrosion Control and Polymers	3 W WW	\$18 / \$36
Sept. 16 – Oct. 29 9 am – 1:30 pm	Advanced Class 3 & 4 Water Operator Certification Course	48 W	\$215 / \$420 Textbooks sold separately
Sept. 16 – Oct. 22 9 am – 1:30 pm	Distribution Operator Certification Course	32 W	\$145 / \$285 Textbooks sold separately
Thur, Sept. 17 9 am – 12:30 pm	Wastewater Operator's Guide to NPDES Permits and Facility Inspections	3 WW	\$18 / \$36
Wed, Sept. 23 9 am – 10 am	Coagulation, Flocculation, and General Charge Chemistry	1 W WW	\$6 / \$12
Thur, Sept. 24 9 am – 12:30 pm	Wastewater Operator's Guide to NPDES Permits and Facility Inspections	3 WW	\$18 / \$36
Fri, Sept. 25 9 am – 12:30 pm	Basic Math for Water and Wastewater Operators	3 W WW	\$18 / \$36
Wed, Sept. 30 9 am – 1:30 pm	Discharges from Breweries and Food Industries to Your WWTF	4 WW	\$24 / \$48
Tue, Oct. 6 9 am – 12:30 pm	Updating Your Source Protection Plan	3 W	\$18 / \$36
Tue, Oct. 13 8 am – 12:30 pm	Did You Forget About Your Wastewater Collection System?	4 WW	\$24 / \$48
Oct 13 – 29 9 am – 12:30 pm	Small Systems Class 2 Water Operator Certification Course	18 W	\$108 / \$216 Textbook sold separately
Thur, Oct. 15 9:30 am – 11:45 am	VOSHA – Leadership in Safety	2 W WW	\$12 / \$24
Tue, Oct. 20 9 am – 10 am	Sodium Hypochlorite: Generation, Application, and Titration	1 W WW	\$6 / \$12
Oct 21 & 22 9 am – 12:30 pm	VOSHA Safety Training Including COVID-19	6 W WW	\$36 / \$72
Fri, Oct. 23 9 am – 12:30 pm	Basic Math for Water and Wastewater Operators	3 W WW	\$18 / \$36
Tue, Oct. 27 9 am – 11:15 am	Asbestos Pipe Safe Handling	2 W WW	\$12 / \$24
Wed, Nov. 4 9 am – 1:30 pm	Discharges from Breweries and Food Industries to Your WWTF	4 WW	\$24 / \$48
Tue, Nov. 10 9 am – 12:30 pm	Updating Your Source Protection Plan	3 W	\$18 / \$36
Dec 8 & 9 9 am – 12:30 pm	Wastewater Odor Production and Control	6 WW	\$36 / \$72
* TCH = Training Contact Hours W = Approved for Water Credit WW = Approved for Wastewater Credit			

Note on Trainings

All classes will be online using Zoom through November and likely longer. Find information about how to use Zoom on our website.

DWGPD and OPR are accepting online trainings for TCHs right now. Renewing water and wastewater operators may request an extension to complete continuing education requirements. At this time, no operator certification exams have been scheduled for 2020.

To request accommodations, call (802)660-4988 or email info@vtruralwater.org

Registration and Payments

Register online at VTruralwater.org/training to pay by credit card or check. You can also register by mailing in the form below with a check.

Members receive a 50% discount on registration fees for all employees.

Cancellations/Refunds

Cancellations received at least 24 hours in advance can receive a refund or transfer to another class. No-shows will be charged the full course fee.

Register Online: VTruralwater.org/training

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Registration Form

Duplicate this form to register for multiple classes.

Course and Date: _____

Attendee Name(s): _____

System/Organization: _____

Billing Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____
(number where you can be reached the morning of class)

Payment Enclosed: _____

Mail this form and payment to:
VRWA
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Questions?
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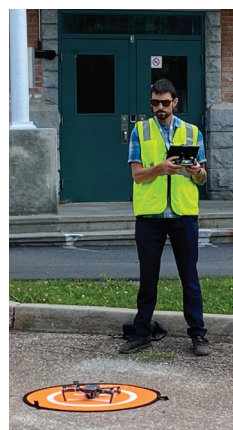


by Wayne Graham
Wastewater Specialist

This column details clever solutions invented by Vermont's water and wastewater professionals. These money-saving, stress-reducing hacks make life at your second home—the treatment plant—a little bit easier.

Flying High

Dana Allen of FluidState Consulting is an FAA Certified Part 107 pilot who uses his skills to help public works staff with smoke testing and inspections using Unmanned Aerial Systems, or drones. When smoke testing in a community with tall buildings, drones are very good tools for inspecting those flat roof drains without having to gain access to roofs. This saves time and effort. A drone can fly directly to a potential source of smoke to determine if it's a roof drain or just a sewer vent pipe, which is hard to do from the ground. Aerial inspection can also help determine where collection system pipes go by observing where smoke issues from vent pipes (no more running through backyards!) Drones can also fly along wastewater receiving streams to search for unknown wastewater or stormwater outfall structures. I have worked with Dana on several smoke testing projects and have had significant results.



Dana Allen (right) uses a drone during smoke testing in Newport, Vermont, in July. Aerial footage courtesy of Dana Allen.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle...

Randy Shimp, chief operator of the Cavendish WWTF (VRWA System Member), solved a pretty big problem without even leaving the plant. The aeration system in the primary pond was no longer operable, so Randy dug an old surface splasher out of the bushes and, after a bit of maintenance, had it on the lagoon and working (below). A portable standby pump station generator provided the electrical capacity to operate it. Dissolved oxygen levels rose and he kept the plant in compliance.



...Repurpose, Retrofit

Sometimes VRWA staff even dabble in Yankee ingenuity. The North Troy WWTP (VRWA System Member) was in desperate need of a return activated sludge pump. They are in the middle of an engineering review and not in a position to purchase a new pump. So VRWA wastewater specialist Elizabeth Walker (at right) and I repurposed a Penn Valley pump from another facility. With some piping modifications and assistance from plant staff, it was operating flawlessly in no time! 💧



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Ten Things I've Learned Teaching Webinars



by Matt Guerino
Training Coordinator

I've been teaching classes on Zoom since the Stay Home, Stay Safe order in mid-March. We've had over 40 online trainings, and it's been a learning process for everyone.

10. Adults are camera-shy; children are not. Most people in my classes are shy to be on camera, and I am too. But my son especially thinks it's cool to see everyone in class. Some of you got to say hi to him at a bunch of my classes.

9. I don't like speaking nonstop for hours at a time. I know a lot of you are laughing at this as I have a tendency to talk a lot. But I miss your stories and hearing from you during class breaks.

8. Dining room tables are better for eating than for teaching. Those of you who took classes in March and April got to see me working from my dining room. It was a

mess of books, reference materials, and cords going everywhere.

7. I touch my face way more than I thought. Did I mention I don't really like being on camera? I keep my camera on for you, since many operators have told me that it helps them stay engaged during class. But then I see myself touching my face all the time. During a pandemic, this isn't exactly the epiphany I wanted to have.

6. Most operators need a little help, but a large majority of you have learned a new piece of technology. I want to tell you, as hard as it was for me to change my teaching process, I know it was just as hard for you. I commend you for your willingness to roll with this change. You have done a great job taking classes and getting your normal work done during a pandemic!

5. Webinars can be fun, but they're a lot of work. Behind the scenes I have had to ask my coworkers to help me proctor classes, watch for questions and track attendance.

4. Mute is a wonderful thing. We've all seen the funny videos where someone on Zoom forgets that their microphone or camera is on while they are picking their nose (or worse). We haven't had any incidents like this, but many of you have heard my dog Abby—she spends most mornings barking at squirrels in the front yard.

3. Since you can only see me from my chest up on Zoom, during the pandemic I've worn shorts to work for the first time ever.

2. I miss seeing everyone, yes you! I know, you can't believe it. I miss seeing you, getting out of my office and driving all over the state. I hope we can get back to face-to-face classes soon, but I know that will probably not be until 2021.

1. You really miss me, and when I say me, I mean the donuts and coffee I bring to class. (Don't worry Zach, I will bring extra treats the next time I see you!) I look forward to seeing you all soon.

Please stay safe and stay well! 💧

Apprenticeship Program Expanding this Fall



by Paula Jackson
Apprenticeship Program Coordinator

Vermont Rural Water's apprenticeship program is expanding this year to create new opportunities for job training at water and wastewater treatment facilities. Among the changes are flexible apprenticeships for small systems and modifications for the COVID-19 world we now live in.

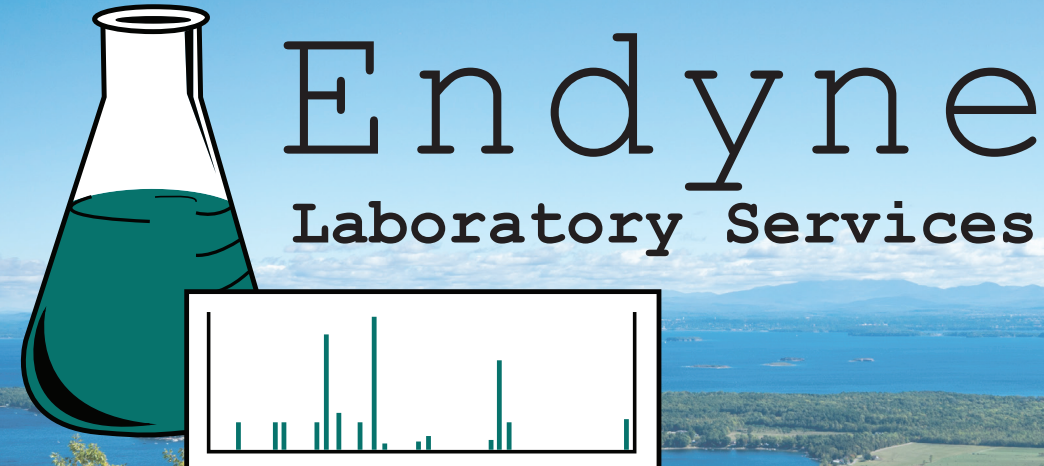
Apprenticeships are designed to teach new operators hands-on tasks through on-the-job training as well as prepare them to pass the certification exams through online/classroom education and self-study.

We are offering six different apprenticeship tracks beginning this fall:

- Water Treatment (2-year program)
- Water Distribution (2-year program)
- Small Water System (1-year program)
- Wastewater Treatment (2-year program)
- Small Wastewater System (1-year program)
- Water and Wastewater (3-year program)

New apprentices can start as soon as October 1, 2020.

For more information, contact pjackson@vtruralwater.org or (802) 342-1356 💧



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