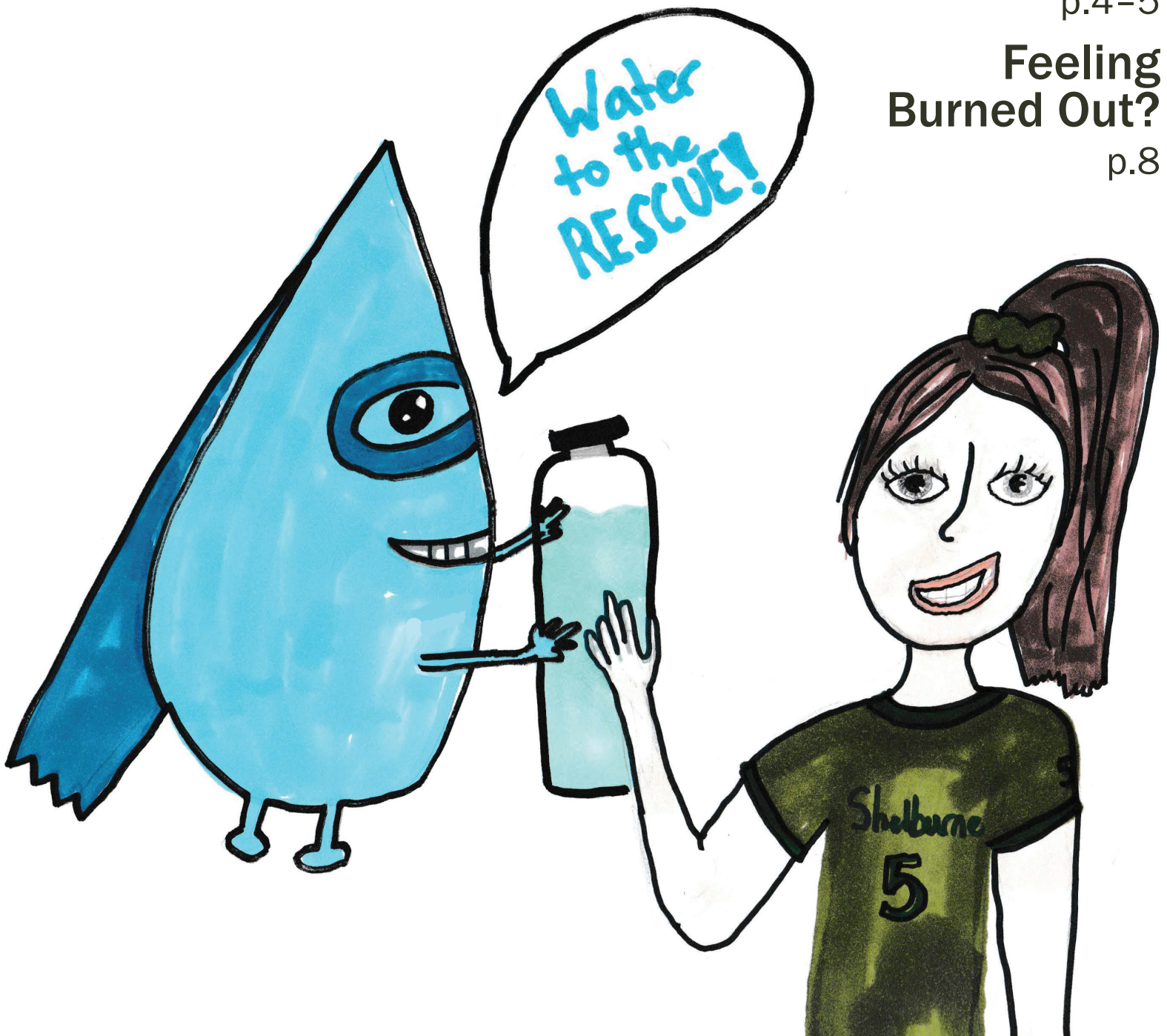


Buddy Ball Receives Tony Torchia Award

p.4-5

Feeling Burned Out?

p.8



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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On the cover: Vermont Drinking Water Week poster contest grade 6 winner Sawyer T. from Shelburne Community School. This year's theme was "Water to the Rescue!"



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Photos from Vermont Rural Water's Conference

We were thrilled to return to Lake Morey Resort on May 11–12 for our first in-person conference since the start of the pandemic. The event was one of our largest ever with over 200 attendees, 40 vendors, 6 training classes, and amazing weather. We would like to thank keynote speakers Ted Brady from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns and Jennifer Palmiotto from National Rural Water Association.

Congratulations are due to Tony Torchia Award recipient Buddy Ball; the first place golf team from Ti-SALES; drinking water taste test winner Caanan Fire District #1; and Champlain Water District, Lunenburg Fire Districts 1 & 2, and Village of Orleans for 35 years of membership with Vermont Rural Water.



The team from Ti-SALES won the golf tournament.



Joe Duncan (right) accepted a certificate honoring Champlain Water District's 35 years of membership.

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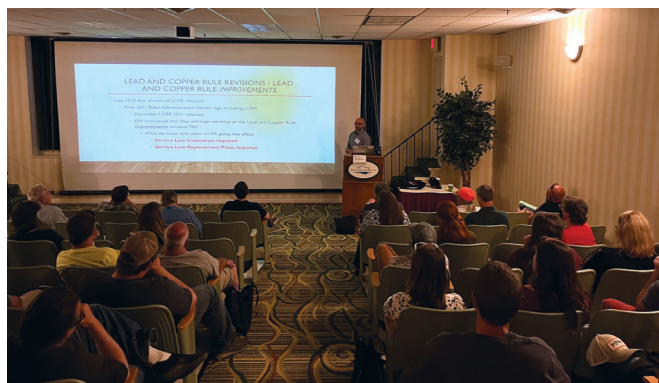
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Ben Montross discussed Lead and Copper Rule revisions and other updates from DWGPD.



Ted Brady (left) and Jen Palmiotto judged the Drinking Water Taste Test.

Buddy Ball Receives Tony Torchia Award



by Matt Guerino
Training Coordinator

Myrlin “Buddy” Ball Jr. was all smiles when he was presented with the Tony Torchia Award during Vermont Rural Water’s annual conference on May 12. Buddy operates two water and one wastewater system in the Northeast Kingdom and exemplifies what an operator must do to provide clean, safe drinking water and treat wastewater in the state of Vermont.

The Tony Torchia Award is given to one person annually in recognition of special contribution to the water and/or wastewater fields in Vermont. The award was created in 2001 in memory of late wastewater operator and board member Tony Torchia.

The 2021 award recipient, Marcel Mayhew, also came to the conference and got an in-person round of applause, which we were unable to do during last year’s ceremony on Zoom.

Talking to Buddy was like sitting down with a history book of his small section of Vermont. He recalls helping the town of Gilman trace their spring transmission lines some 50 years ago. Buddy was working as an electrician in the 90s, and would be called out to help with lightning strikes and other operational needs. He was also part of the initial upgrade to the system during this time.

Then in 2006, the previous operator died suddenly and Buddy decided he would step in and help. I remember first talking to Buddy when he was trying to figure out how he could operate the water systems. He was worried about his community, not about anything else.

He started as an operator-in-training, and within a year he became the full-time



Clockwise from top: Buddy (left) and Gail Ball at Lake Morey; Elizabeth Walker (left) presents the 2021 award to Marcel Mayhew; Wayne Graham (left) presents the 2022 award to Buddy Ball.

operator for Lunenburg Fire Districts 1 and 2. While taking the reins of Lunenburg’s water and wastewater systems he also has helped operate Gilman’s water system and aided Wheelock Fire District 1 and anyone else who asks for help.

My admiration of Buddy is shared by my colleague Wayne Graham, who presented Buddy with the award. “I have known Buddy Ball



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for many years and have been lucky enough to work alongside him,” Wayne said during the ceremony. “It is really cool to give the award to my good friend.”

“Buddy is paid to be a part-time operator for two small water systems and a wastewater facility,” Wayne elaborated. “[But] there is nothing part time about Buddy Ball, because these two small communities need him.”

Buddy has been an integral part of his community for decades. However, he is very humble and always quick to share credit with others, especially his dear wife Gail—who is also the bookkeeper

for Lunenburg Fire District #1. He is a genuine person who really believes in service to his community.

When I asked him what he is most proud of, Buddy said “I am just happy I could give back to the communities for all these years.” He has lived in his community for all but four years of his life, and cherishes his memories there.

We celebrate a person like Buddy because he is deserving. As Buddy and Gail celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary, I hope that they both know what a difference he has made in his small part of the world. 💧

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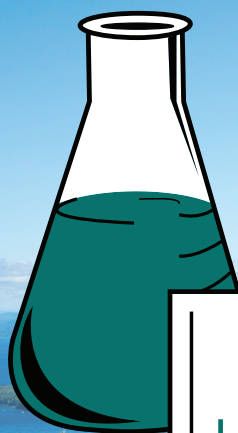
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Training Calendar

Summer 2022

Date	Course	TCHs	Location	Cost (Member/Non)
Thur, July 14 9 am – 12:30 pm	Creating and Updating your Operation and Maintenance Manual	3 W	Hybrid* Zoom or Essex Junction	\$18 / \$36
Tue, July 19 9 am – 12:30 pm	Preparing for a Sanitary Survey	3 W	Hybrid* Zoom or Essex Junction	\$18 / \$36
Thur, July 21 9 am – 1:30 pm	Traffic Control Certification	4 W WW	Hybrid* Zoom or Essex Junction	\$24 / \$48
Tue, Aug 9 9 am – 12:30 pm	Creating and Updating your Operation and Maintenance Manual	3 W	Zoom	\$18 / \$36
Thur, Aug 11 9 am – 12:30 pm	Water and Wastewater Ethics	3 W WW	Zoom	\$18 / \$36
Tue, Aug 23 9 am – 1:30 pm	Basic Math for Water and Wastewater Operators	4 W WW	Zoom	\$24 / \$48
Thur, Aug 25 9 am – 1:30 pm	Advanced Math for Water and Wastewater Operators	4 W WW	Zoom	\$24 / \$48
Sep 7 to Oct 27 9 am – 2 pm	Advanced Class 3 & 4 Water Operator Certification Course	48 W	Combined** Zoom and Essex Junction	\$215 / \$420 Textbooks sold separately
Sep 7 to Oct 13 9 am – 2 pm	Distribution Operator Certification Course	32 W	Combined** Zoom and Essex Junction	\$145 / \$285 Textbooks sold separately
TCH = Training Contact Hours W = Approved for Water Credit WW = Approved for Wastewater Credit				

*Hybrid

Hybrid classes will be offered simultaneously in-person and over Zoom. When you register, please indicate which way you plan to attend. If you need to change, please email info@vtruralwater.org.

At this time, our office in Essex Junction is the only location where we can offer hybrid classes. The address is:

20 Susie Wilson Rd, Suite B
Essex Junction, VT 05452

Please park in lower lot, behind building. Handicap parking is available in upper lot by entrance.

**Combined

For combined courses, some sessions will be held in-person and the rest will be held over Zoom. The schedule of which sessions are in-person will be announced closer to the start of the course.

In-person sessions will involve guest speakers, hands-on demonstrations, and/or field trips. Most will take place at our office in Essex Junction (see address to the left). In-person attendance is strongly encouraged, but it may be possible to watch over Zoom if needed.

Zoom Classes

You will receive the Zoom link by email the day before class. Find information about using Zoom at vtruralwater.org/training/webinar-trainings.

DWGPS and OPR are accepting Zoom trainings for renewal credits. Attendees will receive a certificate of TCHs by email after class.

Exams

Certification exams for water and wastewater operators are being offered by appointment for computer exams and twice per year for paper exams.

Water exam: <https://dec.vermont.gov/water/drinking-water/pwso/operator-exams>

Wastewater exam: <https://sos.vermont.gov/pollution-abatement-facility-operators>

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. Please register early; registrations received less than 24 hours prior to class are subject to a late fee.

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.

Accommodations

We strive to make our classes accessible to all. To discuss concerns or request accommodations, call 802-660-4988 or email info@vtruralwater.org

Register Online: vtruralwater.org/training

Registration Form

Duplicate this form to register for multiple classes.

Course and Date: _____

Attendee Name(s): _____

System/Organization: _____

Billing Address: _____

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

Payment Enclosed: _____

Mail this form and payment to:

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Questions?

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Burnout: Is Work Wearing You Down?

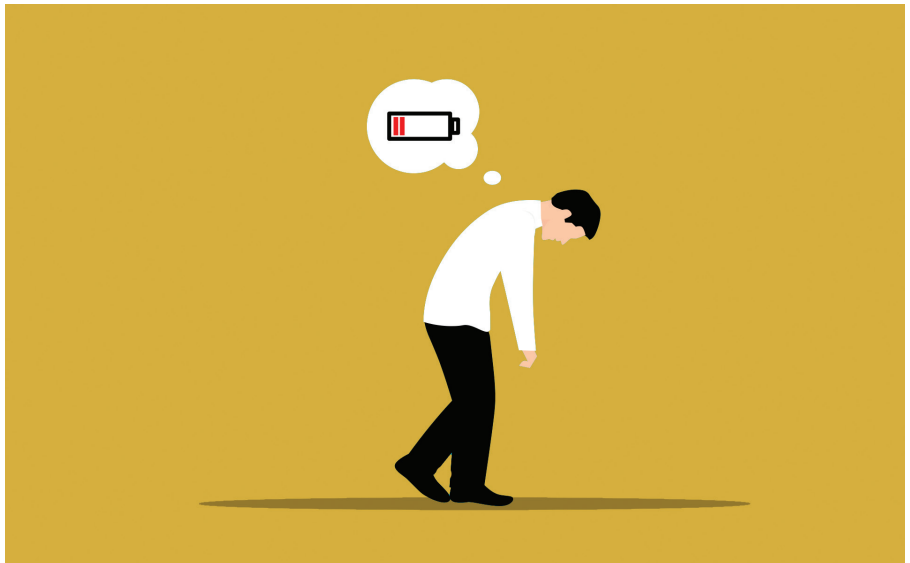


by Diana Butler
Source Water Specialist

The past two years have put a strain on our drinking water and wastewater personnel. As essential workers, they have risked their health and the health of their families to keep the faucets flowing and the toilets flushing. Additionally they have had to meet regulatory requirements despite supply chain issues and labor shortages. As I travel around the state, I am finding many of our water industry workers are experiencing burnout.

The Mayo Clinic describes burnout as a special type of work-related stress that causes physical or emotional exhaustion, a sense of reduced accomplishment, and loss of personal identity.¹

Burnout and stress are at extremely high levels across all professions right now, according to a report by the American Psychological Association.² Burnout affects us physically, mentally, and emotionally. It can



Mohamed Hassan/Pixaby

Symptoms of burnout include, but are not limited to:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Critical or cynical attitude about work
- Lack of energy
- Impatience
- Struggling to begin projects/assignments
- Lack of satisfaction in work achievements
- Irritability with coworkers and customers/clients

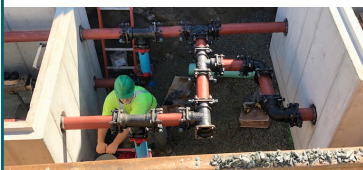
cause you to feel exhausted and disrupt your focus resulting in unsafe work practices and diminished productivity.³

The consequences of burnout go beyond the workplace. It can affect your overall physical wellness, too. The Mayo Clinic says burn-out can lead to insomnia, alcohol or substance misuse, high blood pressure, heart disease, and other illnesses.¹

We tend to assume that burnout is caused by the amount of work and that vacations or reducing the volume of work can resolve it. Turns out that employees who feel motivated, supported, and inspired in their work tend to work more hours and feel less stress. So it is not just the amount of work, but instead how we feel about our work.³

Ideally, an employee experiencing burnout could talk to their manager to make changes to their work environment or start a new project that they are passionate about. Unfortunately, this is not an option for most of Vermont's small

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water and wastewater systems. If we are unable to change the work stressors, how do we manage the stress to reduce burnout?

Science has shown that physical activity is the most efficient strategy for dealing with stress. Deep breathing, positive social interactions, laughter, and creative expression are also effective ways to work through stress.⁴

Take a walk or do some yard work, get on your bike or play some golf. Reach out to your friends and family. Listen or watch something that makes you laugh. Make something! Figure out what works for you and add it to your regular routine. We have to proactively address our stress. Do not wait until the stress has burned you out completely. 💧

¹ Job Burnout: How to spot it and take action. (June 5, 2021). Mayo Clinic. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/burnout/art-20046642>.

² Abramson, Ashley. (January 1, 2022). Burnout and stress are everywhere. American Psychological Association. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2022/01/special-burnout-stress>.

³ Walsh, Alexandra. (April 19, 2021). Worker Burnout: Don't miss the signs as it can hamper a company. Water Well Journal. <https://water-welljournal.com/worker-burnout>.

⁴ Nagoski, E. & Nagoski, A. (2019). Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle. New York, NY: Ballantine Books.

Common Workplace Stressors

Work stressors vary depending on the workplace, but there are some common stressors that researchers have linked to burnout.

- Not feeling supported in your role
- Unclear communication about assignments and expectations
- Lack of control over your workload or resources
- Isolation—no social connections within the workplace
- Workload extremes (too monotonous or too chaotic)

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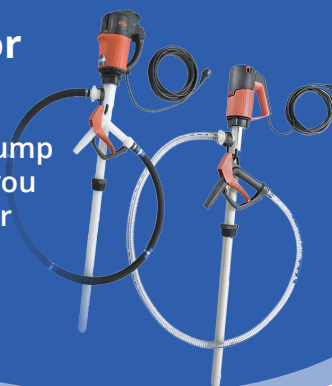


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A Typical Week for a Wastewater Specialist at Vermont Rural Water



by Elizabeth Walker
Wastewater Specialist

I did not enter the water and wastewater industry with a vision of a long-term career. I entered this industry because I was the only person small enough to get into the manway of the sand filter at the wastewater plant, and the rest is history! Now, having enjoyed this great profession for over 43 years, it is time for me to move to retirement.

Vermont Rural Water will be looking for someone to take over my position as of September 30. My work is funded by the Vermont Wastewater Management Program. The purpose is to provide technical

assistance and training to wastewater systems with the goal of reducing nitrogen and phosphorus in treatment plant effluents.

I was asked to describe a week in my job as a Wastewater Specialist. The following shows some of the types of work I do, but it is not limited to just this.

...

Monday morning I load up my microscope and testing equipment and travel to a treatment facility in southern Vermont that is



Elizabeth Walker preparing to take samples from a pump station using a sludge judge.

having process problems. I start by talking with the operators to get the details of the situation and how long has the problem persisted. Then we grab a sample of the mixed liquor, do a staining procedure, and identify a strain of filamentous bacteria. After much discussion, we decide the solution is to reduce the MLSS to 1500 mg/L. The operator later reported that this worked.

On my way home, I stop at a lagoon facility that is having a problem getting good chlorine residual even with increased chlorine feed. We grab a sample of the effluent and test for ammonia, nitrite, and nitrate. The results show that the nitrite is 4.5 mg/L and the dissolved oxygen is less than 0.5 in the lagoons. We come up

with a plan to increase the DO in order to get nitrification to take place to get out of the dreaded nitrite lock.

Tuesday I travel to a small treatment plant in northern Vermont that has had problems with a failing pump. My colleague Wayne Graham found a suitable second-hand pump that the town was able to purchase at a really good price. While Wayne is picking up the replacement pump, I help the plant operators remove the old one. Wayne shows up and the four of us begin the install. By day's end the replacement pump is happily returning sludge. I'm sure glad that I have a change of clothes handy!

Wednesday I head to a facility that I have been helping to create a phosphorus optimization plan. Today I am doing some sampling at pump stations to get background data on phosphorus in the collection system. At the school's pump station, the orthophosphorus is elevated at 18 mg/L. I meet with the school's head custodian, who is interested in finding the cause of this. As it turns out, a cleaning product in the kitchen is the culprit. The custodian took the

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initiative to switch to a different detergent, thereby reducing the orthophosphorus level by more than half.

Wednesday afternoon I stop at a facility that is having problems with their WR-43 Excel data workbook. All of the formulas got deleted by mistake. I sort it out and teach the operator about file management. I also make the Excel workbook more efficient by adding all of the State forms as additional tabs. This trick makes it easier to do eDMR monthly reporting.

On Thursday morning I proctor a three-hour Zoom training. The class is Pathogens in Wastewater

taught by Michael Gerardi. After class, I spend the afternoon catching up on reporting and my monthly logs. I find that the office time makes for a good balance with field time. I work from my home office doing a combination of setting up training classes, researching, and providing remote assistance over the phone to operators.

I take Friday off as it has been a big week and I've already worked 40 hours. The beauty of this job is the flexibility. You get to make your own schedule.

...

As I read through the above descriptions, I realize there are so many other ways that I have provided assistance to wastewater systems.

One thing I must say is there is a great community of people that I really respect and have enjoyed working with over all these years. If you think you are ready to move to a position where your skills can benefit the wastewater community, then please contact me, Wayne Graham, or Liz Royer. Vermont Rural Water is a great organization and all the staff are awesome to work with. 💧



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