


NewsLEAKS

 Vermont
Rural Water Association
Winter 2022-23



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Miss Flint**
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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: photo by Katherine Boyk




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Announcing Emergency Response Trailers



by Liz Royer
Executive Director

Water and wastewater systems that are members of VT WARN will soon be able to borrow a trailer filled with equipment during an emergency.

Vermont Rural Water was able to purchase two 12-foot trailers and a number of pieces of new equipment with a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through the Vermont Department of Health. The goal is for water and wastewater systems to use the trailers and equipment to more quickly restore services after a natural disaster such as a flood.

The new equipment includes ground penetrating radar units, portable correlators, a valve and hydrant exerciser, and a tilt-and-pan sewer line camera. This equipment will complement tools and supplies already available to systems through VT WARN and Vermont Rural Water such as safety gear, lights, generators, boats, pumps, saws, and portable tanks.

This equipment can also be used to perform preventative maintenance that may reduce the impact of a future flood or other natural disaster.

The trailers and equipment will be available for free to members of the Vermont Water and Wastewater Agency Response Network (VT WARN). VT WARN is a mutual aid network that allows systems to share resources and personnel



Two trailers and equipment will soon be available for members of VT WARN to borrow for emergency response and preventative maintenance.

during emergencies. Participation is free and voluntary.

Over the past two and half years, Vermont Rural Water and the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) have revitalized VT WARN. We encourage all public drinking water and wastewater systems to join our industry's mutual aid network. If you are not a member, you can join online for free at <http://vtwarn.org>

In July, Vermont Rural Water held two classes that provided a preview of some of the new equipment and taught operators how to use these tools for preventative maintenance or to

restore water and sewer services after a natural disaster.

We are excited about this opportunity for VT WARN members to have access to this equipment and the improved emergency response and prevention it will provide. If you are interested in an onsite training for your system and others nearby, please contact us.

Look for a comprehensive inventory of available tools and equipment and information about how to borrow the trailers, coming soon! 💧



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Who is “Little Miss Flint”?



by Diana Butler

Water Systems Specialist

I have asked many people within our water community if they have heard about “Little Miss Flint,” and so far no one has answered yes. I myself had not heard anything about her until a few months ago. I think it is a great time to learn about her as we prepare to comply with the Lead and Copper Rule Revisions (LCRR) and start to tackle service line inventories.

We have heard many news reports and presentations about what went wrong in Flint, Michigan. But there is more to Flint than just the failed operations, destroyed infrastructure, and mismanagement. There are people that suffered and died as well as a community that has somehow held together through this tragedy.

Within this community is a young hero, Amariyanna Copeny (Mari), who is known as “Little Miss Flint.” Mari first gained national attention in 2016. She was 8 years old and wrote a letter to President Obama about the water emergency in her community. This letter



Mari Copeny received the Change Maker Award at the 2022 Billboard Music Awards. (Photo by David Becker/ NBCU Photo Bank via Getty Images)

motivated him to visit Flint and eventually led to \$100 million in federal relief money for the city.

Mari is one of thousands of children that may have been exposed to the lead leached from the drinking water pipes and could potentially face long-term developmental issues. The letter to the president was just the beginning for “Little Miss Flint.” She began organizing protests to increase awareness about the suffering in her community. She ran water drives and helped load cases of bottled water into the cars of Flint residents.

The water crisis continued for years, and as

I’m hopeful that this [award] inspires others to fight for what’s right, even when no one else is looking.

– Mari Copeny

Mari grew so did her advocacy. She started fundraising campaigns for projects that would benefit the children in her community. She has raised over \$600,000 for these projects and has filled more than 17,000

backpacks with school supplies.

In 2018 Mari initiated the Dear Flint Kids Project wherein she encouraged people to write letters to children in Flint to tell them that they are

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important and not just a public health disaster. Flint children have received letters from all over the world.

“Little Miss Flint” is now 15 years old and has become an environmental justice activist. She has partnered with a company to provide reusable water filters to low-income communities across the country.

She is still working to empower kids; she has been a youth ambassador for the Women’s March on Washington and the People’s Climate March.

Mari just received the Change Maker Award at the 2022 Billboard Music Awards. Mari commented about the award, “I’m hopeful that this inspires others to fight for what’s right, even when no one else is looking.” She is the youngest person to receive the award.

Though the Flint disaster has forever changed the drinking water industry, we don’t often hear about the actual people that were affected. When we are

feeling frustrated working through the new rules and required tasks of LCRR, think about Little Miss Flint and her community. Mari Copeny is not just a hero for Flint—she is really a hero for us all. 💧

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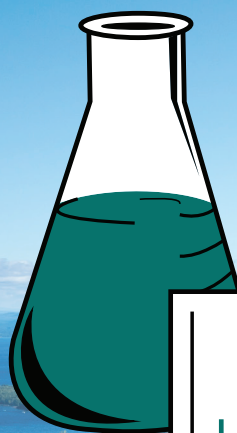


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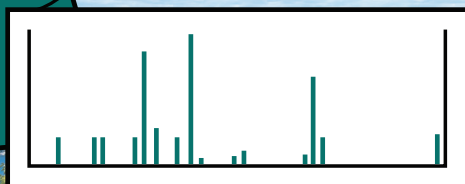
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Training Calendar

Winter 2023

Date	Course	TCHs	Location	Cost (Member/Non)
Tue, Jan 10 9 am – 1:30 pm	Basic Math for Water and Wastewater Operators	4 W WW	Zoom	\$28 / \$56
Thur, Jan 12 9 am – 1:30 pm	Advanced Math for Water and Wastewater Operators	4 W WW	Zoom	\$28 / \$56
Fri, Jan 13 9 am – 11:30 am	Service Line Inventory Course	2 W	Hybrid (Zoom/Essex*)	No cost
Jan 17 – March 8 8 am – 3 pm	Basic Wastewater Course CLASS FULL – WAITLIST AVAILABLE	48 WW	Montpelier**	\$591.50
Thur, Jan 19 8 am – 12:30 pm	Confined Space and Lockout Tagout	4 W WW	Zoom	\$28 / \$56
Fri, Jan 20 9 am – 12:30 pm	Groundwater Treatment New Class!	3 W	Zoom	\$21 / \$42
Tue, Jan 24 9 am – 12:30 pm	TNC Operations	3 W	Hybrid (Zoom/Essex*)	No cost
Wed, Jan 25 9 am – 12:30 pm	Corrosion Control and Polymers	3 W WW	Zoom	\$21 / \$42
Fri, Jan 27 9 am – 12:30 pm	Introduction to Surface Water Treatment	3 W	Zoom	\$21 / \$42
Feb 1 – April 12 9 am – 2 pm	Advanced Class 3 & 4 Water Operator Certification Course	48 W	Hybrid (Zoom/Essex*)	\$275 / \$450
Feb 1 – April 6 9 am – 2 pm	Distribution Operator Certification Course	32 W	Hybrid (Zoom/Essex*)	\$180 / \$300
Thur, Feb 2 9 am – 12:30 pm	Cross Connection Control	3 W	Zoom	\$21 / \$42
Tue, Feb 14 9 am – 11:30 am	Service Line Inventory Course	2 W	Hybrid (Zoom/Essex*)	No cost
Wed, Feb 15 9 am – 12:30 pm	Cross Connection Control	3 W	Montpelier†	\$21 / \$42
Fri, Feb 24 9 am – 12:30 pm	TNC Operations	3 W	Hybrid (Zoom/Essex*)	No cost
Thur, March 2 9 am – 12:30 pm	Water System Sampling	3 W	Zoom	\$21 / \$42
Tue, March 14 9 am – 11:30 am	Service Line Inventory Course	2 W	Hybrid (Zoom/Essex*)	No cost
TCH = Training Contact Hours W = Approved for Water Credit WW = Approved for Wastewater Credit				

Register Online: VTruralwater.org/training

Date	Course	TCHs	Location	Cost (Member/Non)
Wed, March 15 9 am – 12:30 pm	Water System Sampling	3 W	Essex*	\$21 / \$42
Fri, March 17 9 am – 12:30 pm	Corrosion Control and Polymers	3 W WW	Hybrid (Zoom/Essex*)	\$21 / \$42
March 21 & 22 9 am – 12:30 pm	Biological Nutrient Removal	6 WW	Zoom	\$42 / \$84
Fri, March 24 9 am – 12:30 pm	Evolution of Water Metering and Data Collection New Class!	3 W	Hybrid (Zoom/Essex*)	\$21 / \$42
Tue, March 28 9 am – 1:30 pm	Keep Your Water and Wastewater Systems Sustainable	4 W WW	Montpelier**	\$28 / \$56
Thur, March 30 9 am – 12:30 pm	TNC Operations	3 W	Hybrid (Zoom/Essex*)	No cost
TCH = Training Contact Hours W = Approved for Water Credit WW = Approved for Wastewater Credit				

Locations

***Essex:** Vermont Rural Water's office – 20 Susie Wilson Rd, Suite B, Essex Junction, VT 05452

****Montpelier:** Public Works Garage – 783 Dog River Road, Montpelier, VT 05602

†**Montpelier:** Comfort Inn & Suites at Maplewood – 213 Paine Turnpike N, Montpelier, VT 05602

Register Online: VTruralwater.org/training

Registration and Payments

Register online at VTruralwater.org/training to pay by credit card or check, or mail in the form below. Registrations received less than 24 hours prior to class are subject to a late fee.

Members of the Vermont Rural Water Association receive a 50% discount on most registration costs.

Renewal Reminder

Water Operators: Class 2 and 4 certifications must be renewed by June 30, 2023. Class 2 operators need 10 hours of continuing education and Class 4 operators need 20 hours.

Wastewater Operators: licenses must be renewed by July 31, 2023. You need 4–16 hours of continuing education (depending on your license level) in order to renew.

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.

Sick Policy

As we offer more in-person classes, we ask that if you have symptoms of a contagious illness (Covid, flu, or other) you please do not attend classes in-person. If you are ill on the day of class, we will work with you to find a remote attendance option or switch to another class on a different day. We want water and wastewater systems to be able to stay fully staffed and this should help all of us stay as healthy as possible.

Accommodations

Call 802-660-4988 or email info@vtruralwater.org prior to the day of class to request accommodations.

Cold Weather Safety



by Paul Sestito
Water System Specialist

Winter is coming, and it will be cold. I know this is not a surprise to anyone in Vermont, but it is good to take a moment to remember that working outside in cold weather poses special challenges and requires extra precautions.

Cold stress occurs when the temperature of the skin, and eventually the body, drops. This can result in cold-related injury, tissue damage, or even death. There are different types of cold stress including trench foot, frostbite, and hypothermia.

Winter weather also poses hazards like snow, ice, whiteouts, dangerous driving conditions, and power outages. Slips, trips, and falls are an ever-present hazard in the industry, but cold weather and ice have the potential to increase these hazards.

Although it is not always possible, avoiding outdoor work in extreme cold weather is the best way to prevent cold-related illness and injury. Create a “punch list” of indoor jobs like interior painting, cleaning, or maintenance projects. Training classes are another way to keep employees out of the elements and get credits towards license/certification renewal.

If cold-weather work is required, proper planning can make all the difference. Plan extra time for the challenges of mobility and visibility that cold temperatures can cause. Take frequent breaks to



Dress in layers with proper footwear and high-visibility clothing.

warm up. Provide extra workers and work in shifts to reduce the time each person spends outside. Hold tailgate safety meetings to remind workers of the safety hazards of cold weather work.

Having the proper personal protective equipment and gear is crucial as well. Dress in layers with insulating clothes like wool or fleece on the inside and a wind-proof/waterproof outer

layer. You might also consider heated garments like heated gloves or a heated vest. There are now a variety of battery-operated heated garments in addition to single-use hand warmers and foot warmers. Proper footwear that fits well and has good traction is especially important on snow and ice. You can also wear microspikes or Yaktrax on your boots for extra traction. High-visibility clothing is always essential, but especially during the short, and sometimes snowy, days of winter.

Surprisingly, dehydration is a problem in winter because the air is dry and you don't feel thirsty like you do in hot weather. So be sure to stay hydrated. A thermos filled with warm water can be warming and refreshing when you're out in the cold.

Some websites to learn more about winter weather safety are:

www.osha.gov/winter-weather

www.weather.gov/safety/cold

If you have any tips for keeping safe in the cold, we would love to hear them. As always, thanks for what you do and stay safe out there! 💧

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Water & Wastewater Operators: Value Them and Retain Them



by Paula C Jackson
Apprenticeship Program Coordinator

For the past three years I have been working on Vermont Rural Water's Apprenticeship Program. During this time I have learned so much about the current lack of water and wastewater operators and what systems can do to navigate the current employment challenges.

The biggest group of water and wastewater operators are retiring, and there is a lack of applicants for these positions. Retaining your current operators has become critical.

Water and wastewater systems are now competing with private employers who have increased their pay in recent years. Costco now pays \$20 an hour with benefits, and you don't have to pass a certification exam, which is a requirement for most operators.

If you are going to keep up with private industry, start by paying your current employees to commit to your organization so they don't go to

another employer who offers them more money. Extra benefits, such as flexible time to relieve the stress of taking care of family or picking kids up from school, really show an employee that you value them and want them to be happy in their work and personal lives.

Water and wastewater operators are often on call. Make it worth their time to be on call by paying them industry standard. If employees are on call, they should be compensated, because being on call takes them away from things they would normally do on their time off. Offering comp time is another thing that is appealing to many operators.

If your system is down one or two operators, this puts a lot of added work and stress on your remaining employees. You can pay certified operators to come help or cross train employees from other departments. Give your current employees the time off they need to remain committed

workers. When employees get overworked, they may look to change this by going to another employer.

Valuing your water and wastewater operators is critical at this point in time. Often getting the city council or board of directors to realize this and move into the future is the hardest part. Remind your boards of your NPDES permit or your water system's Permit to Operate and the conse-

quences of not having certified operators to meet the strict requirements of these permits.

Vermont Rural Water's Apprenticeship Program helps support new water and wastewater operators on their journey to learn their facilities through on-the-job training and structured training programs to pass certification exams and become licensed/certified operators. 💧

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Elijah Lemieux Joins Vermont Rural Water



Join us in welcoming Elijah Lemieux, our newest Wastewater Specialist. He took over for Elizabeth Walker when she retired at the end of September. Elijah has nearly 10 years of public works and wastewater experience and we are excited to have him join the Vermont Rural Water team!

Save the Date!

Vermont Rural Water's 2023 Conference

May 10-11, 2023
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Details coming soon
vtruralwater.org/conference



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Your O&M Manual: A useful guide or a thorn in your side?



by Matt Guerino
Training Coordinator

All public water systems (except TNCs) are required to have an approved Operations and Maintenance (O&M) Manual that describes how the system should be operated.

Ideally, this manual is not just fulfilling the requirements of the Water Supply Rule, but is a useful guide to running the system.

O&M Manuals are considered living documents, so they should be updated whenever something at your system changes. A new piece of equipment, a new procedure, or a new sampling requirement are all important changes to add to your O&M Manual.

Operators have limited time, which always seems to be spent dealing with emergencies. Little time is left over for mundane tasks like paperwork or updating the O&M Manual. I hope to share some ways operators have maintained their manuals while operating their water system.

One operator used sticky notes to identify places where they wanted to make changes to their O&M Manual. They also dated the sticky notes so they would be able to hold themselves accountable to doing this in a specific time-frame. They designated one day each week when they would work on at least one sticky note. This

approach makes the work feel less daunting and more achievable.

I have recently talked to operators who were concerned because their O&M Manual only has a date when it was initially written and approved, which could be decades ago. There was no additional information about updates that have happened since. It is helpful to have a section in the beginning that lists updates. Make a simple spreadsheet with information such as who is modifying the document, the date of modification, and which section(s) were updated.

Many O&M Manuals have sections that are repetitive, such as the General System Description, System Schematics, and Distribution sections. I suggest that you put detailed information in the most relevant section, and in the others use references to that section. For example, in System Descriptions you might say: "Our distribution system has many types of distribution lines and a range of sizes; see Distribution on page XX for more details." This way, when you update this information, you only need to do so in one place.

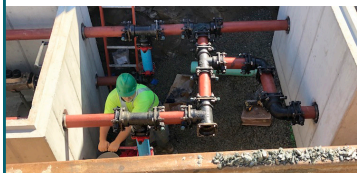
I have found that asking a new operator to read through the O&M Manual can be helpful. They may notice where there are missing steps, information,

or documents. I like to give the example of a child learning how to tie their shoes. An adult might assume the first step is to grab both the laces, but actually the first step should be to put the shoes on your feet or maybe even to find your shoes. Similarly, a person with less working knowledge of your water system may be better able to notice that something is missing because they don't have as much historical knowledge as a seasoned operator.

I would finally suggest that you review Appendix D of the [Vermont Water Supply Rule](#). This section sets parameters of what is needed within your O&M Manual.

Taking on the challenge of updating a document that may be years out of date can be scary. Tackling something as big as an O&M Manual will take time and considerable care. Remember the adage "Rome wasn't built in a day." Set a goal and hold yourself accountable and you will be on your way to a completely updated O&M Manual. 💧

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