



Nevada Water and Wastewater Operator's Forum

Hosted by: Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Safe Drinking Water
901 South Stewart Street, Suite 4001, Carson City, NV 89701

Meeting Minutes Tuesday, June 25, 2013 – 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Location: Richard H. Bryan Building,
2nd Floor Hearing Room
901 S. Stewart Street, Carson City, NV 89701

Videoconference NDEP Las Vegas Office, and Great Basin College
Red Rock Conference Room 1500 College Parkway
2030 E. Flamingo Rd., Ste 230 Lundberg Hall, Room HTC 137
Las Vegas, NV Elko, NV

Phone conference to: 1-888-363-4734, access code 1515199

Agenda

1. **Call to Order and Introductions. (Dale Johnson)** The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m.

Forum Members Present: Dale Johnson, Elko County; Bob Foerster, NvRWA; Cam McKay, KGID; Nathan Adams, Pioche Public Utilities; Harvey Johnson, IVGID

Introductions and Guests: Cindy Turiczek, PUC; Adam Roney, PUC; Ed Quaglieri, PUC; Linda Contreras, AWWA; Crystel Montecinos, Tigren, Inc.; Harvey Johnson, IVGID
John Nelson, USDA Rural Development; Greg Reed, RHGID; Jennifer McMartin, Waste Water Operator Certification (via Conference Call)

Las Vegas: Chris Maes, SNWS; Dennis Geddy; CCWRD; James Wischmeyer, SNWS; Albert Lopez De Los Santos, Jr. came in during item #10

Elko: Lester Porter came in at item # 10. No sign-in sheet since Lynn Forsberg was absent.

Representing the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP): Bureau of Safe Drinking Water; Max Sosa, ES III BSDW Op Cert Program; Linda Northey for Nan Paulson Perkins, Op Cert Administrative Assistant;

2. **Approval of Forum/NTC Minutes from March 03, 2013. – Action Item** Cam MacKay made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Bob Foerster seconded the motion. All were in favor.
3. **Drinking Water Exam Results Review from March 2013 tests. (Max Sosa)** Max discussed the March test results. Max did not have the results broken down by grade, but stated the pass rate for distribution was 66%. Water treatment: 11 passed while 8 failed. For Northern Nevada water treatment there were 13 testers with a 46% pass rate. For Southern Nevada there were 56 testers for

water distribution with a 71% pass rate. For water treatment operators there were 6 testers with an 83% pass rate in Southern Nevada.

There was some discussion about the higher pass rate in Southern Nevada, as opposed to Northern Nevada. There appears to be more training in Las Vegas. Bob Foerster asked if there was an incentive program from Las Vegas that is not available in smaller systems in the north.

4. **Training Needs / Forum Input**

Someone from the Las Vegas conference spoke about the LVVWD not having an incentive program but that there are people preparing for movements in the District due to people retiring. This speaker said he believed the testers are self-motivated. There is support from management for staff to improve their education.

Someone in the audience mentioned that she knew the LVVWD used to contract with the AWWA for employee training, but now they provide the training themselves. And, they can train a larger number of their staff at one time, whereas a smaller system would not be able to do so. They also used to send some of their employees to week long courses for training.

Max asked if the larger systems would allow for smaller systems to send staff to their trainings for some cross-training. Cam mentioned that in some of the northern systems, operators can just call another plant and join in on training with no problem, but the systems that are further away may not be able to. A Las Vegas operator said that sending one of their employees to a 40 hour class would impact a minimum of two other operators. Someone would have to cover that missing operator.

Max talked about how when he was a plant manager out of state, they would take themselves off SCADA and run the plant manually. This would help to keep them in practice with doing calculations manually instead of just relying on the computers to do them. Max said that doing this might help operators to do better in the math section of the tests.

Cam asked Chris Maes what he would see with their regulated PUC systems. Chris said a lot of them are small. Many of them only need D1 operators, some might need a T1. They are pretty small and don't have the available training.

Cam, Harvey, and Bob talked about how the internet can help teach the information needed to pass the tests. Self-motivation is really important. Chris said that a lot of the operators are just taking the minimal tests so they can sell homes. They are not really interested in learning more.

Max said that NDEP is trying to get help with making training more available on-line. He's been working with the AWWA, NvRWA, and Tri-State to help operators have more access to the training. Jennifer McMartin added that there are many people who do not study, and many think they can take a one day course and it will be enough, but it isn't.

More discussion occurred about meetings how there is no central location for meetings. Bob talked about the NvRWA video conferencing and that they will go to systems. Cam discussed incentives to encourage staff to increase their grade levels. Crystal added that to reach the smaller communities, circuit writing and on-line classes are the way to go for rural areas. Or, having videos and have

systems keep track of the time their employees watch certain videos, and then they can be signed off. There are conferences on-line, but someone does need to verify they watched the video.

There was a suggestion of using post-test surveys so operators could explain how their employers might encourage training and studying. Bob is working on an EPA program that this could be incorporated in. One operator was talking about training being done that is split up in 4 hour increments over a two month period. The training is not teaching how to pass the test, it teaches what operators need to know. Harvey mentioned that it is easier for the operators to digest the information in small dosages instead of a week-long meeting.

Max talked about how some of the applications show that it is difficult for operators to get enough time in to qualify for testing. Some operators have many duties so they may be only able to use 30% of their time. Some training may help with this. Crystel suggested having someone send out a weekly newsletter to operator email addresses telling them that their jobs are important, and then have a little article telling about a problem that a plant somewhere in the US may have had a problem with. It could also suggest a subject to study that week. It sounds like a good idea.

Cam liked Crystel's suggestion. He also said the public should be made aware of why operators need training in relation to their health and safety. It would be good for the public to know what could happen if operators are not trained properly. This might get the public to encourage companies offer training to their staff.

5. NDEP Updates (Max Sosa)

a) Senate Bill 65 Max talked about this bill that was signed and became effective on May 22, 2013. Its purpose is to clarify enforcement authority related to regulation of drinking water supplies and certification laboratories that perform analysis of drinking water. This will allow for a proactive approach rather than a reactive approach to help prevent violations from happening.

Section 3 allows the Division to seek civil penalties for violations related to laboratory certification requirements. There was no explicit authority for civil penalties in laboratory certification statutes. Enforcement authority was never really spelled out.

6. NWEA Updates (Jennifer McMartin or Harvey Johnson)

Jennifer McMartin said that since the beginning of 2013, on the Wastewater side, the difference between the computerized exams and the pencil/paper passing rate remarkable. The pencil/paper pass rate is 41% for all grade levels, and the computerized is 57%. The overall average is 52%. She wondered if the State was thinking of considering the computerized testing.

Jennifer thought that some reason for the higher pass rate could be because testers have to pay more to test so they may study more. There are less distractions than with the classroom setting, and they only see one question at a time, instead of 10 at once, so it may take pressure off.

Also, in her June test cycle, she only had 6 people taking the pencil/paper test statewide. She has 17 pending applicants for the computerized test. It is more flexible and has a better end result.

She added that Tri-State moved to Las Vegas at the South Point. People can fly there and take a free shuttle.

7. **Waterlines Publication (All Attendees)**

a) **Review of Prior Issue** Adam Roney indicated he is trying to get their water systems to make asset water management plans. They are trying to come up with a cohesive requirement that would satisfy funding requirements and the new rule making that they have to do with their regulations. They want to come up with one document that will satisfy multiple agencies. They have researched other states and many do not have an asset management plan but that does not mean they cannot come up with one. They want to find one that is easy to use and will work for a broad spectrum of systems. He and Cindy will volunteer for this at the appropriate time.

Cam mentioned there are consultants that will come in and set it up for you. He indicated the hardest part is getting the initial data entered. He added that a lot of the asset management things that you see are not specifically for the water and sewer systems.

b) **Article Assignments for Next Edition** Cam mentioned an email from Jennifer Carr about the updates on the Legislative year that just happened. This will include new bills or changes to bills that will affect us as water systems. This might be something that operators or small systems might like to write about. There are some bills that don't affect just water or wastewater. Some bills don't allow attachments onto someone else's contract, and this could affect those that do road maintenance, sewer, and water. Bob will do a summary if everyone would send bills to him and he will prepare a Legislative summary. Harvey Johnson will prepare a 900-word article on ozone.

Cam asked what would happen if, in every Waterlines article, an 8.5 x 11 poster that would show the importance of having an educated and qualified water operator with their system? Wording could be added that says something like, "Your water system needs you." It could be an insert that operators or water systems could remove and pin up on a bulletin board in their office. Then their Board members could see it and be reminded that having qualified operators is more important than just the bottom dollar. Crystal will do a quiz, and will include Wastewater.

8) **Member's Open Comments**

Cam requested that the meeting agenda be posted on the NDEP website.

Bob Foerster publicly thanked Nan Paulson Perkins for her service to the group and gave a card to Max to give to her. Cam said that he really appreciates all that Nan has done and that the operators appreciate her efforts, as well. Max also extended his appreciation and thanks to Nan. Cam said to extend the group's sympathy and condolences to Nan for her current family emergency.

9) **Public Comments**

Greg Reed requested an update from Jennifer McMartin regarding modification of test requirements and information regarding open meeting law changes. These will affect many people. Some require posting on a State website.

10) Agenda Items for the Next NWWOF Meeting.

The next Forum meeting will be October 2nd, at 10:00 a.m. in the Water Resources conference room with video-conference to Elko and Las Vegas.

11) Upcoming Conferences/Trainings – *New postings regularly*, please visit our Google calendar at: <http://ndep.nv.gov/dwo/main/calendar.html>

Max mentioned various upcoming conferences and training sessions and Bob indicated they're available on the NWRA website. Cam asked Max to have the October meeting put on the website.

12) Next Forum Meeting(s) – *Action Item*

The next Forum meeting will be October 2, 2013.

13) Adjourn Harvey made a motion to adjourn. Nathan seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 11:15.

Reminder to Certified Operators: You are eligible to receive renewal contact hours for attendance at Operator Forum Meetings!