WATERLINE

NEWS AND INFORMATION

FOR PUBLIC WATER SUPPLIERS IN MINNESOTA

Utilities Fight Back against Shady Sales of Treatment Equipment

Many water utilities are facing issues after salespeople for home treatment equipment call on their residents and perform free water tests. While some companies providing treatment equipment are reputable, others are relying on scare tactics to get people to purchase expensive equipment that may not be necessary. Sometimes residents call their utilities for more information but many get sucked in and purchase costly and unnecessary treatment equipment.

Some cities, in Minnesota and elsewhere, are addressing the issue in their Consumer Confidence Reports (CCRs) and through other means of communications. The CCR for St. Paul Regional Water Services includes this text: "This past year, we received many calls from concerned customers approached by companies attempting to sell them water-related products, such as softeners and filters. These sales companies offer a free test of city water. Many of our customers believe these sales people are from SPRWS. Saint Paul Regional Water Services is not affiliated with any private business soliciting customers or offering any products or services for sale. According to descriptions from our customers, these companies claim that some substances exceed allowable limits for drinking water. These claims are false. If our water exceeds the EPA or MDH standards for drinking water, we are required by law to inform the public."

The city of LaCrosse, Wisconsin, sent its water utility manager to anonymously sit in on a sales presentation by a company trying to sell treatment equipment. The manager listed the major items in the sales pitch, including tests for hardness, total dissolved solids, fluoride, and chlorine, in the utility's CCR, along with an explanation of each. The CCR pointed out that the utility is regulated by state and federal laws and that it complies with water quality sampling, testing, and reporting protocols.

In Chaska, Minnesota, water superintendent Dean Hylland got a call from a resident about a company that tested her water and said it wasn't safe, while implying that the company was working with the city. Hylland turned the matter over to the police department, which contacted the company with a warning about its operations. The police also contacted FOX 9 News, which placed a report on its web site that Chaska police and the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension "are warning residents of an alleged scam to sell expensive water filters using scare tactics."

Hylland said he had heard rumors of water equipment companies operating in their area but, until he got the call from the resident, had nothing concrete to work with. At that point, he found it effective to get the police and media involved. "I hate it when our customers have to question the quality of our water," Hylland said.

Roseville Reservoir Being Replaced

A reservoir in Roseville, part of the St. Paul Regional Water Services, is being demolished after more than 90 years of service. See page 3 for the full story.

Clean Water Fund

On November 4, 2008, Minnesota voters approved the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment to the state constitution, increasing the sales tax by three-eighths of one percent and allocating the additional revenue to protect water quality, preserve arts and culture, and support state parks and trails.

Approximately 33 percent of the proceeds of the tax will be dedicated to a Clean Water Fund to protect, enhance, and restore water quality in lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater, with at least 5 percent of the fund targeted to protect drinking water sources. The use of these funds is determined by the Minnesota Legislature and administered by programs within the Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Minnesota Department of Health, and other agencies.

Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) activities will focus on protecting public health by evaluating and communicating scientific information about the potential for health risks from exposures to possible environmental health hazards in drinking water and by ensuring a safe and adequate supply of drinking water from public water systems.

In the 2009 Legislative session, the Minnesota Department of Health received approximately $3,750,000 from the Clean Water Fund for the 2010-2011 biennium. Of this amount, $2,415,000 is for Source Water Protection activities, and $1,335,000 is for the Drinking Water Contaminants of Emerging Concern (CEC) program.

Source Water Protection Activities

MDH Clean Water Fund Activities include development and implementation of community source water protection plans to expand the rate at which community water suppliers enter the wellhead protection program so that all will have wellhead protection plans in place by 2020.

Source Water Protection Grants will establish a source water implementation grant program for public water suppliers to support their efforts to protect public drinking water.

MDH is convening a workgroup to provide comment and direction for the Source Water Protection grant program. Refer to http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/water/swp/index.htm to download the conceptual design for the source water protection grant program. Contact Bruce Olsen, 651-201-4681, bruce.olsen@state.mn.us, for more information.

Emerging Contaminants

The CEC program will identify chemicals in the environment for which current health-based standards either do not exist or need to be changed to reflect new toxicity information, investigate the potential for human exposure to these chemicals, and develop guidance values, which are for guidance only and are not enforceable standards for public water systems. Chemicals evaluated by CEC staff may include industrial chemicals, pesticides, pharmaceuticals and personal care products, and other chemicals that have been released or detected in Minnesota waters (surface water and groundwater) or that have the potential to migrate to or be detected in Minnesota waters. Additionally, the CEC program will deliver useful information on emerging contaminants to interested individuals and groups both inside and outside of state government, so that action may be taken, where appropriate (contamination sites, etc.), to prevent these contaminants from endangering public health.

More information on Minnesota Clean Water Fund activities and the Drinking Water Contaminants of Emerging Concern program is available at http://health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/cwf/index.html and http://health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/risk/guidance/dwec/index.html.

Certification Corner

In order to comply with the Minnesota statutes that regulate the drinking-water program, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) is required to enforce specific certification requirements and deadlines. Here are a few guidelines to follow when you apply and are approved to take a water operator examination.

Filling out and sending in the examination application

Fully complete the examination application form. List your water and/or wastewater operation duties and responsibilities. Sign your name and submit it with the $32.00 examination fee, made payable to Minnesota Department of Health. The deadline for accepting applications is 15 days before the exam date. If you have been approved to take the exam, you will receive a postcard approximately two weeks prior to the exam date. If your application has been denied you will receive a letter from the MDH certification office with the reason for the denial. If you are taking the Class A exam, you need to submit a copy of your current position description. Each time you take an exam, a new application needs to be completed.

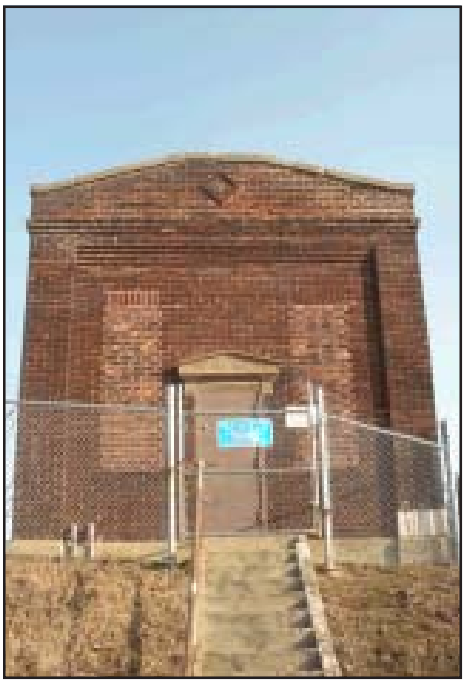
Things you should know about examination day

You should bring a valid form of proper identification, a calculator, and a number-two pencil. The length of the examination is three hours for all class levels. Formula sheets with be provided with all exams.

When will you receive the results of the examination?

Results of the exam will be mailed to you three to four weeks after the exam date. Results will not be given out over the phone. Please do not call. Once you receive the results, you have 90 days from the date of the letter to send in your $23.00 certification fee. If you fail the exam, you must wait 90 days before you may retake the exam. Your exam is available for your review up to 60 days after the exam date. To review your exam, you need to contact the MDH certification office to set a time and date for review.

Notable St. Paul Reservoir Being Demolished and Replaced



One of two gatehouses on the site, which will be demolished along with the reservoir.

A landmark of St. Paul Regional Water Services (SPRWS) is coming down. Since 1919, the utility has had a 30-million gallon reservoir in Roseville, one of the suburbs it serves. Built alongside an open reservoir, which was then abandoned, the covered facility is 30 feet deep and encompasses more than 190,000 square feet. The roof is supported by columns 16 feet apart with the connection to the roof and floor made by a barrel arch, obviating the need for reinforcing steel.

A 1919 report for the St. Paul Board of Water Commissioners included this passage: "We have talked a great deal about our new thirty million gallong [sic] reinforced concrete reservoir, but believe it is excusable inasmuch as we are quite well pleased with it and because it fills a long-felt need. Its construction was a larger undertaking than most people—even the contractors—realized."

The roof is of the groined arch type supported by 21 inch square columns.

At the time of its construction, the reservoir served the high service system in St. Paul, which accounted for approximately 80 percent of the utility's total demand. (The low service area, which includes downtown St. Paul, the city's West Side [across the Mississippi River from downtown], and the West Seventh Street area, accounts for the remaining demand.) Over the past 30 to 40 years, however, the water in this reservoir has been used only for residents of Roseville. According to SPRWS production division manager Jim Graupmann, Roseville averages only 5 to 6 million gallons per day, presenting challenges in maintaining the water quality with such a large reservoir.

The extra capacity, combined with structural concerns about the reservoir, led to a decision to demolish the reservoir and construct a smaller storage facility, a circular 10-million gallon tank with a diameter of 206 feet. The concrete from the old reservoir and two gatehouses will be crushed and used as fill. The existing floor, described by Graupmann as being "like an egg carton" as it arches up to the columns, will have the crushed concrete put over it to flatten it out and serve as a base for the new structure. The new tank will be 40 feet deep and, with a domed roof, will stick up 15 to 20 feet higher than the previous reservoir.

The reservoir was taken out of service in December 2009 with a 48-inch bypass line being used to serve Roseville until the new storage tank is ready in mid-2011.

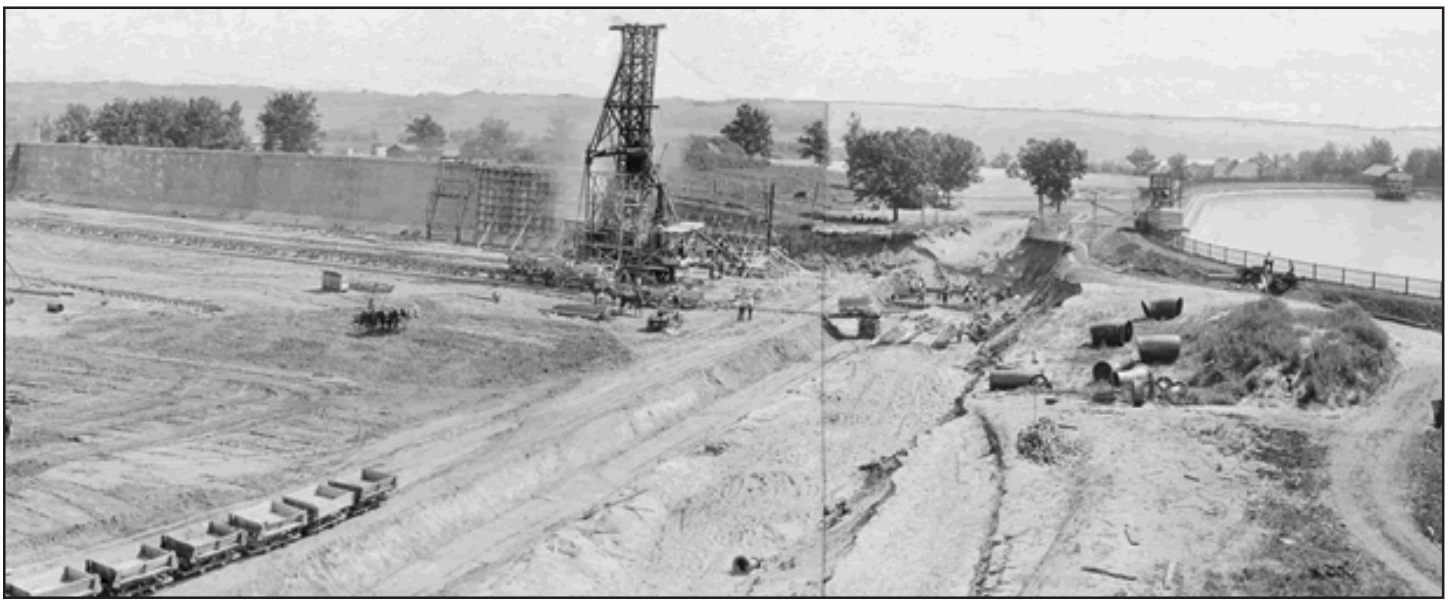


Photo from 1918 shows construction on the 30-million gallon reservoir in what is now Reservoir Woods in Roseville. The east wall of the structure is completed. To the right is the open reservoir, which was abandoned after the new one was completed.

Reminder to All Water Operators

When submitting water samples for analysis, remember to do the following:

- Write the Date Collected, Time Collected, and Collector's Name on the lab form.

- Write the Sample Point on lab forms for bacteriological and fluoride samples.

- Attach label to each bottle (do not attach labels to lab form).

- Include lab forms with submitted samples.

If you have questions, call the Minnesota Department of Health contact on the back of the sample instruction form.

MDH Compliance Corner

The Section of Drinking Water Protection (DWP) of the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) is responsible for enforcing the federal Safe Drinking Water Act and safeguarding the quality of drinking water in our state. The goal of compliance and enforcement activities in the DWP is to promote and ensure compliance with state rules and statutes.

The Drinking Water Protection Section uses a four-step process to guide compliance and enforcement activities:

***Prevention** measures are used to protect the quality of drinking water at the source by controlling potential sources of pollution, regulating land use, reviewing plans and providing advice on construction of water treatment and distribution facilities, preparing and implanting source water protection plans, and inspecting these facilities on a regular basis. The measures also include distributing information on voluntary practices, regulatory requirements, compliance options, and sources of technical assistance to citizens, including regulatory clientele.

***Education** includes informing and providing specific regulated parties with educational opportunities.

***Treatment** measures, including routine disinfection, are used to make the water palatable and safe to drink.

***Monitoring** of water supplies and wellhead protection areas for potentially harmful contaminants, on a routine basis, is the critical element of the state's enforcement responsibilities under the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Any time a drinking water standard is violated, the affected water system must take corrective actions, which include notifying its residents of the violation. In addition to this notification, all community water systems issue an annual Water Quality Report (sometimes referred to as a Consumer Confidence Report) that lists the source of the system's drinking water as well as a list of all regulated contaminants that were detected, even in trace amounts well below the legal standard, during the previous calendar year.

The MDH will promote compliance through prevention, education, and technical assistance activities. Nonetheless, it is critical that the enforcement step is administered fairly and executed in a timely manner. The DWP seeks to conduct compliance/regulatory/enforcement activities in a consistent manner and strives to be accountable for its activities. Toward this end, the section will provide a summary of quarterly enforcement activities in each issue of the *Waterline.*

MDH Compliance Report—January to March 2010

A community water system was fined $1,000 for adding on to its system without proper review prior to construction. (An additional fine of $1,000 would have been assessed if the system did not meet the requirements of the corrective order. However, the requirements were met and the additional fine was not assessed.)

Analysis Centers Enhance Information Sharing on Security Issues

The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency is offering a 12-month subscription to the Water Information Sharing and Analysis Center (ISAC) Pro service, which provides access to sensitive, all-hazards threat information.

The offer is available to drinking water and wastewater utilities, water association employees, state environment and homeland security agencies, and circuit riders. Water ISAC was established in 2002 as a nonprofit water-sector organization in support of infrastructure protection.

The free subscription is available at http://www.waterisac.org.

Another service, the Minnesota Joint Analysis Center (MNJAC), compiles security information in the state and region. In conjunction with the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, MNJAC encourages agencies and partners to submit information regarding suspicious activity through the Intelligence Communications Enterprise for Information Sharing and Exchange web site at http://icefishx.org.

AWWA Book Addresses Taste and Odor Issues

Taste at the Tap: A Consumer's Guide to Tap Water Flavor is a 38-page booklet that has just been published by American Water Works Association. With easy-to-read text and humorous illustrations, the booklet aims to help customers of public water supplies understand tastes and odors, the leading source of complaints to utilities. *Taste at the Tap* is $4.95 for AWWA members, $6.95 for nonmembers, plus shipping, with quantity discounts available. It can be ordered via the web at http://www.awwa.org/bookstore or by calling 800-926-7337.

I love mankind. It's people I can't stand.

—Linus Van Pelt

Sloth is the mother of invention.

—Garfield

We can measure our prosperity not by what we have but by what we take for granted.

Metro District Water Operators School

The dates and locations have been set for the Metro District Water Operators School through 2014:

April 5-7, 2011—Ramada Mall of America, Bloomington

April 3-5, 2012—Ramada Plaza, Minneapolis

April 2-4, 2013—Ramada Mall of America, Bloomington

April 1-3, 2014—Earle Brown Heritage Center, Brooklyn Center

Stimulus Money and the Drinking Water Revolving Fund

The state of Minnesota revolving fund programs led the nation in rapidly committing American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (federal stimulus) money to clean water and drinking water projects. This met Congress's primary goal to quickly distribute the money. The overall objectives were to create jobs, promote economic recovery, and generate long-term benefits from infrastructure investment.

Minnesota was allotted $35,110,000 for drinking water projects, but 30 percent was transferred to the clean water fund because there was a stronger financial demand for those projects. This left $24,577,000 for drinking water. The Minnesota Public Facilities Authority, which administers the revolving fund grants and loans, combined stimulus money with regular revolving fund money to finance approximately $75 million in projects.

The federal stimulus appropriations grant was made available to Minnesota in May 2009. Minnesota's clean water stimulus money was fully committed to projects one month later, and the drinking water stimulus money was committed about five weeks after that. Most loan closings took place from June through October 2009.

Three new features applied to Minnesota's stimulus distribution:

1) Twenty-five percent principal forgiveness was applied to each project (typically referred to as a 25 percent base grant).

2) Congress required that 20 percent of the stimulus money go to green projects. These were projects that had energy or water conserving features or were environmentally innovative. Minnesota provided $1,228,850 in principal forgiveness to those projects to encourage conservation and innovation. Principal forgiveness was applied to 25 percent of a green project's cost on a first-come and first-approved basis.

3) Principal forgiveness was applied to 50 percent of a project's cost up to a maximum of $10,000 for projects that brought a system into compliance with a Maximum Contaminant Level violation. This money typically went to very small water systems.

The features will carry over to the fiscal year 2011 drinking water revolving fund program with two changes. There will not be a 25 percent principal forgiveness base loan. Instead the 25 percent principal forgiveness will be based on a financial need formula that will be calculated at the time of the loan. The 25 percent principal forgiveness for green projects won't be awarded on a first-come basis. Eligibility will be determined by a project's ranking on the project priority list.

Waterline

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CALENDAR

Minnesota Section, American Water Works Association

*June 9-11, Central Water Operators School, Ruttger's Bay Lake Lodge, Deerwood, Contact Lisa Vollbrecht, 320-255-7225.

*October 6, Southwest Water Operators School, Community Center, St. Peter, Contact Mark Sweers, 507-389-5561.

*October 15, Southeast Water Operators School, Cabela's, Owatonna, Contact Dennis DuChene, 507-384-0559.

*October 20, Central Water Operators School, St. John's University, Collegeville, Contact Lisa Vollbrecht, 320-255-7225.

*November 30-December 2, Northwest Water Operators School, Holiday Inn, Detroit Lakes, Contact Jeanette Boothe, 651-201-4697, or Stew Thornley, 651-201-4655.

Information for all district schools, including agendas, is at http://health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/water/wateroperator/trng/schoolagendas.html

***Suburban Utility Superintendents Association School,** October 26, Minnetonka Community Center, Contact Dan Helling, 651-450-2566

Minnesota Rural Water Association, Contact Kyle Kedrowski, 800-367-6792

*June 24, Operation & Maintenance, Wahkon

*July 21, Operation & Maintenance, Spring Grove

*July 28, Operation & Maintenance, Warren

August 18-19, Operator Equipment Expo, Waseca

September 15, Operation & Maintenance, Zumbrota

*October 6-8, Water Certification Refresher Course, St. Cloud

October 26, Winterizing Your Water System, Detroit Lakes

October 27, Winterizing Your Water System, St. Cloud

November 9, Financing Your Community Projects, St. Cloud

*November 17, Operation & Maintenance, St. Cloud

November 18, Cross Connection & Backflow Prevention

December 1, Operation & Maintenance, Glenville

December 8, Operation & Maintenance, Biwabik

MRWA Class D and E Training

Class D
October 21, Rochester

Class E
June 15, Winona

Note: Class D workshops are eight hours, and Class E workshops are four hours. The morning session of a Class D workshop is the same as a stand-alone four-hour workshop for Class E operators; thus, Class E operators may attend either the stand-alone four-hour workshop or the morning session of the Class D workshop.

For an up-to-date list of events, see the training calendar on the MDH web site at:
http://health.state.mn.us/water/wateroperator/trng/wat_op_sched.html

***Includes a water certification exam.**