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Winter 2025

Communication Failure

Becoming a Professional Operator

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The Wyoming Connection is the official publication of The Wyoming Association of Rural Water Systems. It is published quarterly for distribution to member systems, water and wastewater Operations Specialists, water related agencies and companies, legislators and government officials.

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The Association

Wyoming Association of Rural Water Systems is a non-profit association that provides on-site, one-on-one technical assistance and training to small municipalities under 10,000 population and all water and wastewater systems throughout the state. Equal Opportunity Provider.

Cover Photo – Seminole State Park. Photo by Mark Court



WARWS' Mission:

To provide the assistance necessary to meet the needs of our membership and to ensure the protection of Wyoming's water ~ our most precious resource.



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2025, or How Two Decades of Service Have Evolved

2025 will mark a watershed year for Wyoming Rural Water and yours truly. My first day in this position was January 1, 2006 as the first Executive Director of the Association. Until that day, the Board of Directors along with very capable office staff had successfully operated and grown the association since 1989. At the end of 2025, I'll complete 20 years here at Rural Water. The Board of Directors had just a few items that they wanted me to work on and to be judged on initially:

1. Increase association non program revenues.
2. Increase federal or state program revenue.
3. Elevate the influence of the Association in state and federal regulatory agencies as well as within the legislative arena.

I'd like to think we have accomplished those three goals, as well as many more. First and foremost, none of this is possible without a very experienced and dedicated staff meeting the needs of association members. Secondly, is the very experienced and dedicated staff at each and every Public Water System in the state. Without their (your) input on industry issues, trends and training needs, we would probably not be meeting the needs of those we serve.

Technical Assistance and Training – This program started well before my time but boy has it grown and become a force within Wyoming. Kathy Weinsaft has been with me for all of my time except for about the first 6 months. Without her passion and dedication and her interaction with all of you over the phone, onsite and during the multiple training sessions we conduct often, you might not feel as if your training budgets, time and opportunities for staying current was worth much. Her knowledge and input from all of her discussions and research into training opportunities forms a lot of the basis for our advocacy and legislative needs discussions.

Source Water Protection Planning – Source water is everything! If we don't have any or don't protect what we do have, nothing else really matters. As they say, the one thing we can't live without is water. Many of you may remember Jim Van Dorn. We had Jim around for quite a while and it was a very informative time. Jim had forgotten more than a lot of people know about wells, operations, maintenance and regulations. In conversation we had about the future, he mentioned a few "operators" around the state that he felt were pretty darn good and would be a good fit for Rural Water one day. One of those was/is Michelle Christopher. In fact, she was pretty much at the top of his list. When we lost Jim, staff and I approached Michelle and, well, she has lived up to Jim's hype. She began her time with us as a Circuit Rider but transitioned to Source Water Protection

WARWSDOKU

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The objective is to fill in the empty squares so each row, each column, and each 3x3 block contains the numbers 1-9 with no repeats.

Planning when that position opened up. Her experience in surface water as well as ground water issues has been invaluable.

For me, everything Rural Water does starts with Source Water. It is the over arching umbrella that gives us entry to any discussion about water. A lot of our advocacy in regulatory issues is due to her input and data collection surrounding source water and its integration into those issues.

I am really not very experienced or skilled in utility operations, maintenance or regulations but I can regurgitate discussion around those topics only because of the talents of the staff in being able to explain it to the old guy as well as all of the operators who have been able to do the same for me in the many discussions I have with operators around the state. Over the years, I'd like to think I have gained a little more than a rudimentary understanding of the industry, but I learn every day that I have a lot more to learn. (and let's just say, I'm real good with finances, accounting etc.... but I am in awe of the extreme math skills all of you operators bring to the table every day!!!)

Circuit Riders and Wastewater Tech – Originally, Rural Water Associations utilized onsite training and technical assistance in helping water and wastewater systems understand the regulations promulgated by the sparkling brand new Safe Drinking Water Act and the Clean Water Act beginning in the early to mid 70's. Wyoming Rural Water has been at the forefront here in the state doing just that with

very talented and experienced former water and wastewater operators since 1989. We have had several very good Circuit Riders and Wastewater Techs over the years. The discussions with all of the operators and elected officials during those years have really given me the ammo to relay concerns, issues to our elected Congressional officials, regulatory agency personnel and industry professionals. All of those discussions have really brought to light that the regulations we all have to live with and live up to each day is not a "one size fits all".

It has been the real world complications and being able to travel onsite all over Wyoming to see exactly the on the ground implementation difficulties that has been able to shape much of my advocacy. I'd like to think state and nationally, those discussions have shaped practical revisions that allow this industry to truly provide "Quality on Tap" drinking water to our customers. I owe it to the very professional and dedicated CR's and WW techs we've had over the years. Randy Rumpler and Brian Linton have the honor of carrying on the work of the CR's now. Joe Dankelman stepped into the Wastewater Tech role when Mark Court retired and is doing a fabulous job.

We also have pressed Ross Jorgensen back into service on a part time basis and picked up Sunny Schell to round out the certified staff.

Creating and operating the apprenticeship program with Riata Little-Walker has allowed us to introduce the profession to new generations who may find their calling in this industry.

Manning the office is the mainstay in Donna Uribe. Her knowledge of the operators and systems and keeping training hours straight for all of you makes our jobs easier and our Office Manager/Accountant Cori Wondercheck has the unenviable task of keeping up with my revenue generating ideas (that's Mr. P speak for keeping me out of jail).

These programs have formed the core of Rural Water services since inception. While we now use technology to get the word out quicker and to more people consistently with email, Facebook and virtual training, we will never lose sight that onsite, seeing is believing, one on one discussion, problem resolution "boots on the ground" is the premium training and technical assistance method now and as it has been since the 70's and the NRWA beginnings.

Your association has grown with non-program revenues accounting for about 40% of our annual budget now. Voting Membership (systems) has doubled since 2005 and we have added many other individual and supporting memberships. Industry suppliers (Associate members) has also almost doubled over the years. Non-Program Revenue has grown from roughly 10% of the budget to what it is today and allows us to do the work required, requested and needed.


Thanks to the work that all of you do on a daily basis and the need to continually have a voice in Washington as well as boots on the ground assisting you all, our federal program funding has remained steady as long as we are successful with the Congressional appropriators and then if

our program applications are successful. The last few years has seen a large growth in competitor technical assistance organizations (some of them still wonder if Wyoming is real), which has held our program funding either flat or in some cases has declined. Our program revenue does not match the costs we incur to provide the services required as a condition of the federal funding given inflation and general expenditure growth. Fortunately, we are able to supplement the federal funding with some of the non-program funding to make sure we are able to provide the technical assistance you need and deserve.

We have also been able to add a State Funded program to provide the same quality onsite technical assistance and training to non-community systems. Many of these systems form the backbone of Wyoming's tourism industry so we are very pleased to be able to bring our expertise to this group on a more consistent, daily basis.

With Certified Water/Wastewater program staff totaling 6 along with Kathy and I collectively making over 2000 onsite visits to community water systems annually as well as providing over 12,500 man hours of training hours annually, Wyoming Rural Water is the go to group that many state agencies, federal offices and agencies, operators, Mayors and legislators call and rely upon for industry issues and solutions. We could not do it without all of you!!

So, here comes 2025 and with it comes a very different environment than the one we have worked within for decades. In the conversations I've had so far, I think Wyoming will be in a good position to utilize our strengths, now if we could just get some snow (water)!! Mr. P.



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Becoming a Professional Operator

Professional is rarely a term that is heard on a water break, emergency sewer cleaning or late night at the treatment plant.

I can think of a few other words getting flung about with reckless abandonment, but professional just isn't one of them. However, the people who are doing these jobs are professionals. Professionalism is defined as the competence or skill expected of a professional (i.e., a person who gets paid for what they do). All the operators I have worked with exhibit a high degree of professionalism. And those that didn't... they are no longer operators.

Let's face it; our industry doesn't allow for failure without consequences. If we fail, somebody's getting sick. Given that we meet the minimum definition of professional (gets paid for work, extensive training and high degree of skill), do we consider ourselves professionals? Do our boards, decision makers and the public consider us professionals?

One attempt to raise the professionalism of our industry is the Professional Operator program from WPI. WPI, or Water Professional International is the organization who develops the standardized certification exams for the water and wastewater industry. If it's been a minute since you took an exam, you might know them as ABC. (These are the post-Louise exams, for those who had to fill out their exams by carving stone tablets – but I digress.)

The Professional Operator program allows operators to collaborate with professionals across state lines, share knowledge and further the industry. To fully understand the process, I volunteered as the lab rat to apply to the program.

*From this point, this article will document my personal experience with the PO application process. All opinions expressed are my own. But most of my articles should come with this disclaimer.

The first thing is to choose which certification you want to apply for. The PO program offers Levels I-IV in Water Treatment, Water Distribution, Wastewater Treatment and Wastewater Collection. I chose to apply for a Level IV Water Treatment certification since that's the highest certification I hold, and where most of my experience has been.

The next step is to figure out if you're able to apply via reciprocity or if you need to take the exam. WPI recognizes the 2017 WPI exams for reciprocity. Fortunately, Wyoming switched to the 2017 exam in 2018, so if you've taken a


WPI exam since 2018, you can apply for reciprocity. Alas, I decided to apply for the Level IV Water Treatment certification, and I passed the exam in 2012, so I'm studying to take the Level IV water treatment exam. Again. No, I'm not thrilled about it, but I get to work with a great group of study buddies, so I'm excited about that.

Also, the WPI PO program does not recognize the Small Systems Water Exam, or the Lagoon Exam. If you've taken these exams for certification in Wyoming, great! But you'll still need to pass either the Level 1 Water Treatment, Level 1 Wastewater Treatment, Level 1 Distribution or Level 1 Collection exam, depending on which PO certification you're applying for. If you work in a well or lagoon system, are you "allowed" to take these exams? Yep, WPI doesn't care. But it won't change the classification of the system you work for in Wyoming.

Once you've chosen the certification and method you will apply for, you will need to make an account on Certemy, the platform that the PO certification process uses. Go to <https://www.professionoperator.org/certification/> to start this process. Once you get logged in, you'll need to fill out several steps, General Information, Education, Experience, Facility Point Rating System, Continuing Education and Exam Location. You'll also need to acknowledge that all information you provide is correct to the best of your knowledge and sign the code of conduct.

Quite a lot of the required information can be found on your DEQ OpCert page. I was able to work with Kim Parker to get spreadsheets of my training history, copies of my college transcripts and high school diploma (THANK YOU, it saved a massive excavation through several boxes) as well as the specific facility configuration and ranking for the water

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plants I worked in. I uploaded the files to the platform, where the notification box tells me they are pending verification.

The work experience can be confusing, because how we talk about Direct Responsible Charge (DRC) in Wyoming is slightly different than what is being asked for on the application form.

Generally, in Wyoming there is one operator who is designated DRC per system, with other substitute responsible charge operators. Having 6-24 months DRC experience as a requirement for PO certification might seem like a massive barrier to certification. Fear not, WPI recognizes DRC as anytime you were fully certified to the level of your facility and left in charge. So, you need to parse out how much of the time you've worked has been spent as the "lead operator", or other responsible-ish designation. Your supervisor will need to verify this time requirement. Or in my case, I had the clerk verify this experience because my supervisor passed away in June.

Once this process has been completed, I'll pay the application and exam fee and sit my Level IV water treatment exam. If I pass, I'll be able to add the letters PO behind my name. To maintain this certification, I'll add the continuing education hours to my Certemy account (not unlike what I do with my Wyoming certifications) and pay the renewal fee.

What good is it going to do me? Beyond getting to see if I can improve my exam score because I'm that kind of nerdy,

I get to promote an industry that I didn't choose, yet it and the operators chose me. I get to educate decision makers and the public about the men and women who are the thin brown line (insert poop joke) standing between them and the destruction of public health and polite society. And hopefully, I'll reach one young person, and they will change the world.

So – if you're intrigued about the whole PO thing, ask me anything. I can't promise I'll have the answers, but I'll work to find them! WPI will host a pinning ceremony to recognize the operators if we get a large enough cohort. Kathy and I have set a goal to have six professional operators across the disciplines by 2026. If you decide it's more bother than it's worth, that's ok. Please consider yourselves professionals of the highest caliber. I know I always do.

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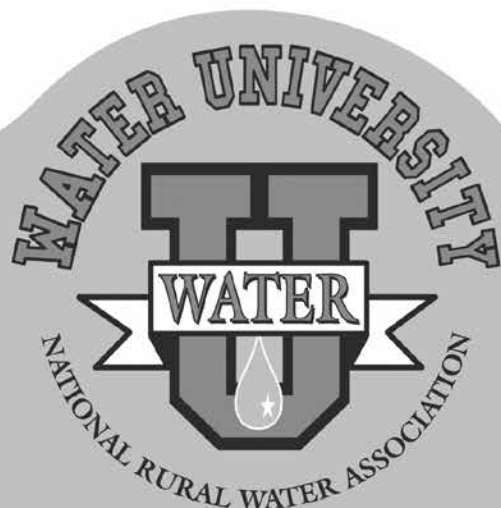
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Operator's Corner

Water Questions by Michelle Christopher:

1. True or false? Disinfection and sterilization are the same thing.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. Over pumping of a well may cause:
 - a. Lowered water table, reduced available yield, contaminant intrusion and subsidence.
 - b. Subsidence, increased water table, contaminant purging and reduced power requirements.
 - c. Contaminant intrusion, fracking, increased available yield and entrained gases.
 - d. Reduced available yield, reduced water quality, iron bacteria and reduced power requirements.
3. A pump is not holding its prime. Which of the following is the most likely cause?
 - a. The mechanical seal is stuck
 - b. There is a water main break within the distribution system
 - c. The foot valve is worn out
 - d. The Amazon subscription was not renewed.
4. Why does water with a high dissolved solids content have a greater potential for corrosion?
 - a. Water with a high dissolved solids content has increased conductivity
 - b. Water with a high dissolved solids content reduces scale formation
 - c. Water with a high dissolved solids content cannot form protective films
 - d. Water with a high dissolved solids content increases the presence of sulfur reducing bacteria.
5. A water plant set it's alum feed rate at 135 lbs per day. If the flow rate through the plant is 1.8 MGD, what is the actual dose in milligrams per liter?
 - a. 625.5 mg/L
 - b. 9 mg/L
 - c. 29.1 mg/L
 - d. 0.12 mg/L

2. What is an air gap?
 - a. A direct connection between drinking water and an unapproved air supply
 - b. An open, vertical drop or vertical empty space between a drinking water source and potentially contaminated water.
 - c. The difference between the highest point in the distribution system and the lowest point in the collection system
 - d. A method of aerating wastewater within the collection system that has become septic.
3. True or false? Lagoons or stabilization ponds are capable of removing ammonia from wastewater
4. When organics from inadequately treated wastewater are discharged to a receiving stream, oxygen is depleted by:
 - a. Algae during the day
 - b. Limestone rocks
 - c. Pathogens
 - d. Bacteria
5. A stabilization pond has a capacity of 2 acre-feet. Assuming the pond is empty, if the flow into the pond averages 0.15 MGD, how many days will it take the pond to fill?
 - a. 0.652 days
 - b. 13.3 days
 - c. 0.10 days
 - d. 4.35 days

Wastewater Questions by Michelle Christopher:

1. What is infiltration?
 - a. Flow into a collection system from residential connections.
 - b. Percolation of a septic tank effluent into the collection system.
 - c. Seepage of groundwater into the collection system.
 - d. Occasional releases of industrial wastes into the collection system.

- Answers Water
1. C 2. B 3. A 4. D 5. D
 1. Convert acre-ft to gallons: 1 acre-ft=326,000 gallons
 2. Convert gallons to MG (million gallons)
 - a. $(2 \text{ ac-ft})(326,000 \text{ gallons})=652,000 \text{ gallons}$
 - a. $652,000 \text{ gallons}/1,000,000 = .652 \text{ MG}$
 3. Divide .652 MG by flow to get days
 - a. $.652 \text{ MG} / 0.15 \text{ MGD} = 4.35 \text{ days}$
- Answers Wastewater
1. Chemical Feed, lbs/day=(Flow, MGD)(Dose, mg/L)(8.34 lbs/gal)
 - OR Dose, mg/L = $\frac{\text{Chemical feed, lbs/Day}}{\text{Flow, MGD}(8.34 \frac{\text{gal}}{\text{lbs}})}$
 2. $(135 \text{ lbs/Day}) / (1.8 \text{ MGD})(8.34 \frac{\text{gal}}{\text{lbs}})$
 3. 8.99 or 9 mg/L
- Answers Water
1. B 2. A 3. C 4. A 5. B

Communication Failure

In the immortal words of the Prison Captain in Cool Hand Luke, “what we have here is a failure to communicate.” If that quote isn’t familiar to you I recommend the movie! Effective communication is paramount to succeeding in anything that needs to be done. It is the backbone of a successful workplace. It fosters collaboration, problem solving, ensures clarity and enables everyone to do their best work.

The thing about effective communication is that it is easier to screw it up than it is to actually accomplish the task. Here are some of the most common causes for communication failure:

- Lack of clarity and ambiguity – What you are trying to convey may seem clear to you, but one of the most common causes of communication failure is a lack of clarity in the idea that is being conveyed. If what you are saying can be understood in more than one way it is likely to be misinterpreted. This can lead to confusion and mistakes. One of the ways that this can be fixed is by providing the desired outcome you are trying to achieve if you are giving instructions. If you are the person receiving the instruction, ask what the desired outcome is and get a timeline for accomplishing the tasks.
- Ineffective listening – It takes more than talking to communicate. The most important communication skill is listening. That is why God gave us one mouth but two ears. If someone is speaking to you, try not to be distracted. Put your phone down. Listen actively and repeat back what you think you heard.
- Cultural and language barriers - Culture does not just mean from a different country, it may also mean someone from a different age group/generation. Words that mean one thing to you may mean something entirely different to someone older or younger than yourself. Not everyone communicates in the same manner. These different communication styles can cause misinterpretation of messages. Look for non-verbal cues if you are communicating face to face.
- Technological Failures - Recently our internet at work was down for several days. People assumed I was ghosting them. Nothing could have been fur-

ther from the truth. Relying too heavily on technology also reduces face-to-face interactions. Get out there and mingle. We need to speak to one another, not just text or email.

- Overload of information - There is too much information. Just because you can communicate does not mean you need to do so. When people are bombarded with too many messages, they may struggle to prioritize, retain, or act on the most important task. This information overload can lead folks to disengage or at the very least miss key details amidst the information clutter.
- Emotional Barriers – This only makes sense. Think about it. Haven’t you ever been so mad that you couldn’t hear what the other person was saying? Strong emotions can interfere with effective communication. When individuals are stressed, scared, frustrated or upset, their ability to communicate clearly can be impaired. Emotional responses may lead to not hearing what is being said, let alone being able to respond to it appropriately.

Complaining without solutions is whining and that is unacceptable in Wyoming. So here are some strategies for improving communication in the workplace.

- Establish clear channels of communication. Make sure that everyone is on the same page about when emails are needed or when a text will suffice. For me personally, I prefer written communication because I save everything. When discussion happens about a decision that was made last year, I can pull up an email to document what we were thinking at the time.
- Encourage and practice active listening – Active listening should be considered a core skill for all of us. Focus on understanding the message. Ask questions. Repeat back what you think you heard. Provide feedback.
- Foster a culture of openness and feedback. For those of you who supervise staff, try to make sure that you encourage feedback and everything is transparent. Are there any of us that haven’t worked someplace where you were only given information on a need to know basis? This not only stifles communication but it also hinders problem solving.
- Use technology wisely – Zoom and our phone can be great enablers, but they should not replace face to face communication. Use it as an add on and it can benefit you with time or cost savings. I love doing our virtual training, but they can never take the place of being in person with you.

- Clarify what needs to be done and who is responsible for accomplishing the tasks – There are lots of way to do this from clear and well defined job descriptions to regular staff meetings. Make sure everyone knows what they need to do and when they need to have it done. Here is a hint if you are fortunate enough to actually have a job description if more than 50% of what you do is covered by “and other duties as assigned,” you probably need a new one.
- Promote Emotional Intelligence – Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify and manage one’s own emotions as well as the emotion of others. Before you can do this, you need to identify and name one’s own emotions. Here is some homework. What you are feeling right now? Check in with yourself a couple of times a day and see if there is a pattern to your feelings. By doing this and helping others do it as well, it can minimize distracting and destructive outbursts.

So there you have it. Communication failure in the workplace can have far reaching consequences. Now you should be able to identify the places where you can strengthen good communication and have some strategies for doing so. If you think you might need some help with this, give me a call. I will try to be a good listener and will even come do communication training if you think that would be helpful. In fact, I am looking forward to seeing and communicating with you soon.

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34th Annual Spring Training Conference 2025

April 15th-18th, 2025

Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center, Casper, WY

When you are trying to do more with less, it is very important to gather up all of your available resources. That is what Spring conference is all about. There are resources out there that you may not even be aware of. Those resources will be here for you to learn about and reach out to. Our jobs get more complicated by the day. We just need to have the right tool and resources for the job. Whether that is pump installation or climate resiliency, Wyoming Rural Water is bringing it to you. There are a ton of new classes and new resources we are looking forward to sharing with you.

Some of your most valuable resources are your fellow operators. There will be lots of time for you to network and learn what is working and not working in other systems throughout the state. There will be lots of vendors as well with new products to make your job easier. Wander through the vendor hall and gawk at all the new things that are available.

Gather up all the available resources and be a rock star at home! See you in Casper.

Board of Director Openings

Every year, the Wyoming Association of Rural Water Systems has Board of Director elections depending on the Region of the state of Wyoming for Board seats that are at the end of their term. These are 3 year terms and there are currently no term limits. Board members must be employees, elected officials or designated representatives of a voting member system (PWS's that are eligible for USDA RD funding typically serving populations under 10,000). The organization's By Laws define voting member as Non-profit public water, wastewater, associations, districts, municipalities and (or) other types of public utilities of any size with 10,000 or fewer population, engaged in the transportation, distribution and/or sale of public utility services in the rural areas of the State of Wyoming.

Board members provide oversight of and direction to the Executive Director on policy issues/items including budgetary, program, legislative and professional direction. Board members receive no direct compensation for serving. Board members are reimbursed for travel expenses to attend official association meetings, can attend in person conferences and training sessions at no cost including hotel and per diem. Board members can attend virtual training sessions at no cost.

For 2025, one region board seat is up for election. The Southeast region includes Converse, Niobrara, Carbon, Albany, Platte, Goshen and Laramie counties.

Those interested can contact Mark Pepper, Executive Director for more information. A letter of interest must be received by March 31st to be included in Business Meeting materials distributed to voting member delegates. The Annual Business Meeting does entertain floor nominations for Board seats as well. Announcements for the Annual Business Meeting will be made during the first two weeks of April per the By Laws.

The Best Tasting Water in Wyoming

We invite every system attending conference to enter "The Best Tasting Water in Wyoming" contest. The winning system will be hosted (airfare, room, and meals, for one representative) in Washington D.C. at the National Rural Water Rally 2026 by the Wyoming Rural Water Executive Director and Wyoming's National Director. The delegation will meet with officials from the USDA Rural Development, USEPA and will visit with Wyoming's US Senators and Representative to discuss water issues facing systems in Wyoming. To enter, bring 1/2 gallon of your water, in glass and on ice to the registration booth when you check in.

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Set up can begin Tuesday 3-5pm. Official opening Wednesday at the 10am break. Tear down will be after the 3pm break on Thursday, or you can stay until the end, if you choose.



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34th Annual Technical Conference

April 15th-18th, 2025

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I plan to attend only the Pre-Conference ‘Emergency Response, It’s More Than You Think’ virtually on the 16th (No Fee) _____

I plan to attend only the Pre-Conference in-person on the 15th (No Fee) _____

FULL REGISTRATION April 15th - 18th, 2025

(Includes Pre-Conference, all classes, Exhibit Hall, meals and breaks, and **Certification processing**)

Member – Early Bird, payment included (By 3/15/25)	\$395 _____
Member – After 3/15/25	\$445 _____
Non-Member Early Bird, including a new <u>Individual Membership</u> through 12/31/25.....	\$520 _____
Non-Member after 3/15/25, including a new <u>Individual Membership</u> through 12/31/25.....	\$570 _____
Decision Maker / Clerk	\$150 _____

I plan to bring a water sample for the ‘Best Tasting Water in Wyoming’ contest (circle one) – YES NO

One-day only registrations	Member	Non-member
Wednesday only: (classes, lunch, Exhibit Hall, Game Night)	\$250	\$275 = \$ _____
Thursday only: (classes, lunch, Exhibit Hall).....	\$225	\$250 = \$ _____
Friday only: (classes)	\$155	\$185 = \$ _____

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Wyoming Association of Rural Water Systems
34th Annual Training Conference – BOOTH REGISTRATION
April 15th - 18th, 2025 Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center, Casper, WY

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Type of Product/Service: _____

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Exhibit Hall – 8' x 8' space, 6' skirted table, pipe and drape, 2 chairs, wireless internet, meals for two. If you have more than 2 representatives, a fee of \$40 per representative will be charged.

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Note: A few booths are numbered the same as the sleeping room right behind it. If you choose one of those booths, you must also take that sleeping room. Reserve the room by emailing Ashley Perrey aperrey@ramkotacasper.com.

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A Note From Joe Dankelman

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joed@warws.com
307-439-9065

Seminole State Park

Traveling around the great state of Wyoming has long been the biggest perk of my job. I get the pleasure of exploring the small out-of-the-way camps to the bigger towns spread throughout the state. I have recently started missing visiting some of our great state parks. Of the many to choose from, one stands out above all else. Seminole State Park is truly worth the trip if a weekend getaway is on the to-do list. This Park has something for the old crowd to the young at heart. Of course, pack the kitchen sink, because no stores are anywhere close by if ya forget something.

Directions are easy enough, not that google could not lead ya right to it. If your running down I-80, hit Sinclair and hang a right, follow the road to State Park HQ. That's a little simplified, that's truly all that it takes. Watch for the full-time residents, they tend to take up both sides of the highway, especially towards dark.

The mountains seem far off for a time; however, they are truly worth the wait as you head into them. Drive up camping is not as pronounced as other parks, but through some careful planning it can happen. Space at the camping sites is sometimes limited, so some pre-trip reservations are recommended as with many places at our great state parks. wyoparks.wyo.gov Once there, kick back and enjoy a very secluded place on earth. From my visits, I can say the boat traffic is almost nonexistent, which always makes a day in the sand most enjoyable. The camp conditions are extremely well maintained, and for the most part a friendly family experience can be had by all. If camping on top if others is not so much on your to do list, bring a boat along. Grab a map, and head on out in the direction of your choosing. I strongly recommend bringing a rod to try entice a fat walleye to nail your favorite lure, for an amazing snack on the beach. Yep that beach !

The staff here is to say the least amazing at providing an amazing camping environment for all. I'm not sure how the state finds these amazing people, but for sure I hope they keep up their excellent standards! Please keep the drama down and follow the rules that the Park has in place.

The staff is also amazing at keeping these camp spots family friendly as well! If you're looking for your next spot for a kegger, go elsewhere! As with all the state parks in Wyoming that provide drinking water, their employees are licensed through the DEQ. To the normal person this may not be a big deal, however considering that many water born issues happen at non-licensing facilities, I sure do feel better knowing I'm safe to fill up a cooler before boating all day.

The Park employees go out of their way to show off their area and keep the campsites looking pristine. I do travel in my free time, and I for one judge all other states by the standards of Wyoming. In these days of post Covid, these secluded places are slowly giving way to catering to the masses. In a way this influx of people is a great boost to Wyoming as a whole, but for those who live here, this may not be ideal.

Come Spring, go explore the great State of Wyoming. If that includes a Spring Black bear hunt, a spring Turkey blast, or one of countless activities we all enjoy, take a day to be young again.

I see the draw to this amazing state, so enjoy the great outdoors before it gets packed. I live on the west side of this state, and I can say post Covid has changed the area forever, whether that's a good thing, I'll leave that everyone to decide for yourself. Heck, after all, I'm a transplant as well, and I have been blessed to see Wyoming since the eighties.

In this article I just wanted to touch on a few of the great opportunities our great state offers at a very affordable price. A special shoutout to the great staff at our state parks who also share a unsung/ thankless jobs. Maybe that water operator job we share brought some unwanted popularity, but I'm not sure if there is a more important job to have keeping everyone safe. Afterall, I never could put a price on a beautiful sunset in the hills surrounded by friends and family.



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A Note From *Brian Linton*

Circuit Rider
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Meet Circuit Rider Brian Linton

In 2000, I began my municipal career as a Clerk Treasurer in Meeteetse, Wyoming, where I served for three years. During that time, I wrote a grant for new playground equipment for the city park. Later, when I became the Public Works Director, I had the opportunity to help install that playground equipment. My three years as Public Works Director in Meeteetse allowed me to earn several licenses, including a Level III Water Treatment license, as well as Level II Distribution and Level I Wastewater and Collections licenses. The water plant I managed used a micro membrane filtration system, which was an exciting and valuable experience.

In 2006, my family and I relocated to Idaho Falls, Idaho. There, I briefly worked at the City of Idaho Falls' wastewater treatment facility before transitioning to a role as a maintenance manager at a potato processing warehouse. In 2009, we moved to Lander, Wyoming, where I worked at the Level IV water treatment facility and earned my Level IV Water Treatment license. While in Lander, I also achieved my Level II Wastewater and Collections licenses and became certified as an ASSE Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester.

One of my favorite experiences in Lander was hosting tours for local 5th-grade students. Each tour lasted two hours and gave the kids hands-on opportunities to fill sample buckets with water, add chlorine, and test for chlorine residuals. We toured the facility, returned to the lab to retest, chart the residual amounts, and create a chlorine demand curve. The students loved using micro pipets to add chlorine, spectrophotometers for testing residuals, and recording the results—it was incredibly rewarding to see their excitement for learning.

While working in Lander, I pursued further education at Central Wyoming College and the University of Wyoming, earning a Master's in Geographic Information Science Technology (GIST). This journey even took me to the Dinwoody Glacier at the base of Gannett Peak to study glacier changes over time. I also earned my Part 107 Drone pilot certification and enjoy flying drones whenever I get the chance.

Outside of work, I treasure time with my family, which includes my seven children—five boys and two girls—and 15 grandchildren spread across the U.S., from South Carolina to North Dakota, Utah, Idaho, and Wyoming. I have a passion for Dutch Oven cooking and ran a catering business for 25 years until our kids grew up and moved away. I also enjoy target shooting with my family when they visit and exploring the incredible outdoors of Wyoming.

Now, as a Circuit Rider, I'm excited to meet operators across Wyoming in their towns and systems. I look forward to discovering parts of this beautiful state that I haven't yet explored and providing assistance wherever I can.



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A CLOSER LOOK AT METER REPLACEMENT PROGRAMS

Nothing lasts forever, including water meters, regardless of which types or manufacture of meters are used. Every utility should have a meter replacement program with an established schedule based on age, consumption, accuracy, expected battery life, a combination of these or some other formula. Routine meter replacement is a prudent practice with a goal of achieving maximum useful meter life without sacrificing accuracy, which equates to lost revenue.

There aren't enough pages in this publication to discuss all the considerations or variables for a meter replacement program, so this article focuses on mechanical meters and presents a few factors related to meter manufacturers, materials, and register types to mull over for those beginning or continuing meter replacement programs.

Meter Manufacturers

There is a vast array of meter manufacturers on the market, and each claim to be better than the next. Choosing between them can be challenging. Keep in mind that the goal is to have a meter that remains accurate for years to come. Additionally, with any mass-produced product, there may be some manufacturing issues. If that occurs, you'll want to ensure that the meter manufacturer is willing to identify and address the problem and make it right. This should include consideration for the labor resources you allocated to address the problem, not just the cost of the parts or meter to correct the issue.

Public entities are often bound by purchasing laws or guidelines that sometimes require purchase based on the lowest bid. This can lead to problems, such as subpar meters, meters by multiple manufacturers installed in your system and less staff familiarity with each meter. If this sounds familiar, look to set or update your specifications to ensure you are getting a meter that meets your immediate and future needs, not just the lowest cost meter. To avoid subpar meters, require specific meter specifications over and above the minimum AWWA standard. For example, meters supporting a higher minimum flow rate indicate a larger measuring chamber resulting in better long-term accuracy. Meters with lower extended low-flow accuracy register smaller leaks. Also, while most mechanical meter accuracy warranties are limited by a similar number of years, the number of gallons of flow can vary. Consider specifying published warranty parameters.

There are some genuine benefits to ensure meter manufacturers stay competitive with pricing by publicly bidding meter purchases, but there are some drawbacks to consider. Although it can be a scary proposition to enter a long-term relationship with a meter manufacturer, there are also several advantages, including:

- Familiarity with product – Your staff will become very familiar with the design and function of the meters.

- Pricing — There is always the potential to negotiate pricing. However, the more meters you plan to install and replace, the more leverage you will have negotiating lower costs.
- Contract — In some cases, multiple-year contracts for pricing can be established, which significantly helps with budget estimates.
- Staging for AMR/AMI — Some manufacturers offer the potential to move to their AMR/AMI system with little effort.
- Support and training — Manufacturers are typically more responsive to your needs, including support and training, when they are your approved manufacturer.

Meter Materials

Meters can be made from many different materials. It will be up to your utility to determine what works best for your system as long as the meters meet or exceed AWWA standards.

Manufacturers make variations of the same meter, so consider the cost benefits of mixing different materials. For instance, if your utility has traditionally installed brass meters, including the lid and register shroud, there can be savings gained by switching to a composite lid and shroud. Nearly all the meter components can be specified, so work with your manufacturer to identify areas that do not compromise meter performance but reduce costs.

If considering moving to a different material or manufacturer not previously used, complete a pilot test with the meters. Note any issues with installation, reinstallation, or otherwise. Different materials and manufacturers have different dimensions, even if the lay length is the same. This could result in clearance issues when the meter is replaced. That turns a relatively quick replacement into a lengthier and more costly process, especially if damage or alterations to the installation are needed.

The reinstallation of a meter is something you should also consider. Although your utility may not have the practice of regularly reinstalling a meter in different locations, there are several other reasons why a meter may be reinstalled at the same place. Take note if the meter is difficult to install during reinstallation. Some softer materials used for the threaded meter ends may tend to slightly distort after installation. This can result in the inability to tighten the swivel couplings onto the meter by hand, making for a frustrating and more time-consuming installation.

Lastly, double-check that maximum and continuous flow rates are not impacted by different manufacturers and materials. Even meters produced by the same manufacturer may be affected if an alternative material is used.

Register Types

Registers typically come in two forms: 1) a register that cannot integrate with AMR/AMI; and 2) a register that allows for the migration to AMI in the future. These registers typically have a wire attached to the register, which allows for a radio to be installed. Deciding to convert to an AMR/AMI system is a significant decision for any utility. The pros and cons are well documented, with many resources available to review.

If your utility has yet to commit to AMR/AMI, you should consider if this is a viable option within the next several years. If your utility is considering a conversion, it will be less expensive to install meters with a register able to connect to a radio now versus paying the additional labor and cost of the register to retrofit at a future date. The reason is that the register is the most expensive part of the meter.

Even more costly is the labor to revisit a meter to replace the register in the future with a compatible register. Nobody likes to pay twice for something, so making this decision now can save the cost and waste of replacing the register in the future. If you choose to do this, consider specifying a universal connector versus a proprietary connection to allow for AMR/AMI radio options. Not specifying a universal connector could mean cutting and splicing wires to utilize a different manufacturer's radio. This splice can be the source of problems in the future, including radios functioning sporadically or not at all.

Many registers are now available with a digital display which can provide additional functionality and even store historical read information. However, consideration should be given to using these because some of the displays are powered by a battery which means the useful life of the battery must be given thought. Stocking replacement meters for several months could possibly mean impacting the life of the battery. Additionally, if also using an AMR/AMI radio, there are now two batteries to contend with. The concern of when to replace the meter could then shift from accuracy of the meter to when the battery will fail.

As mentioned at the onset, there are many variables to consider for your meter replacement program. Hopefully this article helped you evaluate some options you may not have previously considered or will be the start of future conversations about different ways to administer a water system's meter change out program.

BIO – Dustin Ensminger is a licensed water and wastewater professional with 26+ years of experience working in municipal water and wastewater systems in AZ, OR, WA, CA, and WY.

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This program provides funding for clean and reliable drinking water systems, sanitary sewage disposal, sanitary solid waste disposal, and storm water drainage to households and businesses in eligible rural areas.

Funding

Long-term, low-interest loan funding is available. If funds are available, a grant may be combined with a loan if necessary to keep user costs reasonable.

USE YOUR FUNDS TO FINANCE THE ACQUISITION, CONSTRUCTION, OR IMPROVEMENT OF:

- 01 Drinking water sourcing, treatment, storage, and distribution
- 02 Sewer collection, transmission, treatment, and disposal
- 03 Solid waste collection, disposal, and closure
- 04 Storm water collection, transmission, and disposal
- 05 Other related activities such as permits and legal fees



Scan the QR code to view more information and start your application.

A Note From Randy Rumpler

Circuit Rider
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307-921-2844

Circuit Rider

It's been about 6 months now since I started my new adventure as a Circuit Rider for the Wyoming Rural Water Association. Just some of the ins and outs I would like to share. I have watched for years all the other circuit riders doing their job, and thought I would like to try that. Being close friends with most of them Dan Chamberlin, Ross Jorgenson, Jim Van Dorn, just to name a few. Watching Kathy put all the training together to get everyone their hours needed.

Well, I jumped in with both feet and started to travel and learn the job. It has been a joy to meet every operator and see their systems. Most of you I knew from all the conferences we have attended, I just never knew everyone's name, but now I do. Being on the road, most of the time, 4 days a week can get trying, and I do not sleep well in motels. A person gets a little worried about the road in the wintertime. I have my car down getting new tires installed as I am writing this. Talking with the operators and some Directors, I have been welcomed with open arms. I have been asked several questions that you might need help with, if I could not answer those questions I would research and get back to that person. Some of the systems that I have helped has been taxing and made me put my thinking cap on, but we always got things figured out.

Some of the trying things with the job is learning all the ins and outs of policies and procedures. Coming up with a route to travel to get the most contacts from your trip. There's been a couple systems that won't take the time to see you, but I will not stop trying.

So if you like to travel and visit with other operators this is a job for you. You will meet some of the best people you ever will. They have become some of the best friends I will ever have and I am glad to call them friends and professionals!



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Our Western Heritage

by Kathy Weinsaft

Winter

Shhh...It is the quiet of winter. That quiet is one of my favorite things about Wyoming's winter. Winter has a whole different, sound and pace. It is about the only time us Wyomingites slow down. Admittedly, we slow down because we have no choice, but one of the things that happens as we lessen our pace is that we are reminded of the things we love. Winter is a great time to take stock of those things. I may not be Oprah, but come with me as I share Kathy's favorite Wyoming winter things.

PACCA socks - Socks are way important. They keep our feet dry and warm as we trudge through the winter precipitation. When my feet get cold, I feel cold all over. Pacca's are made from Alpaca fiber which makes them thermoregulating. They can be worn from season to season. They are a little bit spendy, but I bought six pair 3 years ago and have rotated them daily. They are almost in as good a shape as when I purchased them, so if you consider the life cycle cost, they are pretty darn budget friendly. Now it is time to slip those well socked feet into some great winter boots. I love mine. They are Lukees by Muk Luks. I got them at Murdochs on sale and they just keep on going.

If you need to get out in the snow or simply want to explore the beauty of Wyoming's trails by snowshoeing, my absolute favorite shoes are Tubs. I was turned on to these by Michelle after she heard my horror story of trying to get my snowshoes on properly. Tubs are really simple. You put your foot in them and snap the latch shut. That is it. No fooling around with all sorts of straps and buckles. Not only are they easy to put on, but they come in just the right size for your body and feet. They are a winter homerun in my opinion.

When you get back in and want to warm up is there anything more appealing than a hot cup of coco? I know there are all sorts of mixes and fancy options, but nothing beats good old fashioned Hershey's coco powder. Maybe it is because I have fond memories of making coco with my mom. She always let me stir so it wouldn't burn. It may be old fashioned, but there is just nothing better than a mug of Hershey's coco with lots of little marshmallows floating on top.

Take your coco and put your well stockinged feet up and watch an episode of Lonesome Dove. I have the ultimate collection! It may be old, but it is still one of my very favorite westerns, and there is not a winter I don't watch the ultimate collection. If you don't have the ability to use a DVD anymore, you can catch it streaming on Amazon or Peacock.

Hungry after all that Lonesome Dove action? Head over to the kitchen and make up some Shepard Pie Soup. It is a favorite Kathy winter dinner. It may sound strange, but once you try it you will be hooked for life. Scramble up some

ground meat with garlic and onion. Add a bit of flour and spatula it around for a minute. Boil and mash some potatoes with butter and sour cream. Add chicken broth to the meat and vegetables. Add some half and half and Worcestershire sauce and seasonings of your choice. Bring to a boil and reduce to a simmer. Stir in the potatoes until they are well combined with the broth.

If you have an immersion blender, now is the time to break it out. If you don't, just keep stirring. Add in a bag of frozen vegetables and there you go. Garnish with shredded cheese if you like and enjoy a fabulous Wyoming winter dinner. Sorry I don't have the amounts of everything. I experimented with this recipe and seem to never make it quite the same way twice.

There isn't a bad season in Wyoming. Enjoy the slower pace and quiet of winter.

It is, after all, part of our Western Heritage



2	7	5	1	6	8	4	9	3
3	1	4	5	9	2	6	7	8
9	6	8	7	4	3	2	5	1
4	3	1	8	7	9	5	2	6
7	8	6	2	5	4	3	1	9
5	9	2	6	3	1	8	4	7
8	5	7	4	1	6	9	3	2
6	4	9	3	2	7	1	8	5
1	2	3	9	8	5	7	6	4



Self Portrait

Scrawny Girl's Gran's Chocolate Roll

by Michelle Christopher

As I write this, Thanksgiving is looming over my head like an angry poultry-geist. My kitchen is about to transform from a mild-mannered office space into a mad house of herbs, spices, root vegetables, berries and flour. Thanksgiving dinner might be about a bird, but dessert is about one thing, and one thing only: Chocolate Roll. Don't come at me with some story about a gourd laced sludge in a pastry shell, in my mom's family, the dessert of choice is swirls of chocolate cake and whipped cream.

My gran passed in October, so this is my family's first holiday without our matriarch devising the menu and giving us instructions. It's odd... Thanksgiving has a set menu, with tried-and-true dishes. Yet, we felt slightly adrift creating the menu we've been using for the last forever years. Within

this small chaos, one thing remains rock solid – there will be chocolate roll. The actual recipe comes from my gran's mother, and actually calls for “dusting a tea towel with powdered sugar.” When I learned to make chocolate roll from gran, she informed me that, “it was an awful mess, I just use plastic wrap.” Feel free to do the same.

The recipe appears simple, and it's more about the process than the ingredients. Several tricks I've learned after some super sad attempts are to include prep the pans and plastic wrap ahead of time. Basic success depends on the cake coming out of the pan whole and being flexible enough to roll up. The cake cooks extremely quickly, so don't plan on having time while it's baking to do any prep work. The cake is also the most flexible while warm, so having the whipped topping slightly thawed before spreading it on the cake is also helpful. Another thing Gran taught me to do is to lay the plastic wrap on a pan or board of a similar size to the baking pan. This makes it easier to remove the cake from the pan onto the plastic.

Granny Smith's Famous Chocolate Roll

5 egg yolks, lightly beaten

1 tsp vanilla

1 cup powdered sugar

¼ cup cake flour – I've used regular all purpose, it works – you just have to sift more

1/3 c cocoa powder

5 egg whites beaten to soft peaks stage

1 16 oz tub of whipped topping or whipped cream. My original recipe calls for Dream Whip, but that may be a Powder Wash, Colorado phenomenon.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Prep a jelly roll type pan (11x17, low edges) with parchment paper. Lay two strips of plastic wrap over a separate pan of similar size and dust with powdered sugar. Stir the yolks and vanilla together in a separate bowl and set aside. Sift the powdered sugar, flour and cocoa powder together three times. Add the egg yolk mixture and stir until well combined. Gently fold in beaten egg whites until just combined. Bake in preheated oven for 10 minutes. Remove immediately and flip onto plastic wrap. Remove parchment paper if it's stuck to the cake and spread whipped topping over the cake. Roll the cake from the short side, using the plastic wrap to guide the wrapping process, but don't get the plastic wrapped in the cake. When the cake is rolled, wrap it in the plastic you laid the cake on, seal and freeze until it's serving time.

To serve, slice the cake in 1"-ish rounds. The end pieces don't look that pretty and are therefore reserved as tax for the baker. This cake should remain frozen until its cut and served. I suppose you should also freeze any leftovers, but I don't think there's ever been leftovers to worry about.

Cost-to-serve Rates – You Need These

Carl Brown, President GettingGreatRates.com

Johnny Depp, star actor, turns to Ron Howard, star director, and asks: “In this scene, what is my motivation?”

Director Ron: “Clearly, a superhero operator like you wants to provide excellent water service. So, you must convince the City Council to go hard at setting fair and adequate rates. Ignore those ‘CAVE’ people!”

Johnny: “But they will vote the council out next election...” Fade to black.

Sorry to burst your bubble, operators. Don’t look for your life’s story in the movies. Just keep doing your superhero, behind-the-scenes fantastic work.

But Director Ron was right, bad rates, bad water service. Excellent rates need a champion. That could be you. So, step up – advocate for excellent rates!

Your utility rates must be adequate. Maybe not today. Maybe not even 10 years from now. But the piper must be paid eventually. Better to start now than to wait for the crisis to explode.

Your rates must be fair. You know how it feels to be treated unfairly. Even if the unfairness was just in your head, it still made you angry. It made you want to resist.

Ratepayers feel the same way. So, to keep them feeling good about rates (or at least not bad), they must believe those rates are cheap, if that is plausible. If that ship has sailed, at least they must feel they are getting good value for what they pay.

But what is “fair,” really?

Cost-to-serve rates are fair. But getting to cost-to-serve is not just science and math. Cost-to-serve may not even be your final rates destination because fairness is in the eye of the beholder. Your ratepayers will be the final deciders about fairness. That said, if your council or board and their advisors use good reasoning, solid math, empathy for difficult to pay customers, and they present the rates “story” well, most ratepayers will get on-board with those fair and adequate rate.

Back to adequacy, your ratepayers may not need to pay fully sustainable (adequate) rates now and always. The federal and state governments have standing grant

programs and interest-subsidized loan programs (subject to change) to help some utilities hold down their rates – make them more affordable. And when the economy has a mortgage industry meltdown (2008-09) or a COVID pandemic (2020-22), the federal government falls back on the “throw money at it” tactic. Yes, it is ugly. It is not fair. It is poor fiscal management. But it happens sometimes. It might happen for you. But do not count on the federal and state governments to bail you out of everything every time for all time. Your ratepayers will always pay most of the costs they cause your utility to incur.

You get it. You need fair and adequate rates. Well, and somebody needs to convince the ratepayers they are fair and adequate. It’s a hard job. It’s a thankless job. But it

CAVE People

Citizens Against Virtually Everything

must be done by your rate setters if you want to be the star operator providing excellent service. If your rate setters take heed, this article series will take you there. For now, there are some things you can do to get started:

- Use the excellent help and guidance the Association provides. They are experts in many fields that impact your work.
- Talk to your board or council regularly. Keep them aware of how things are going and what you need to make, and keep, the service excellent.

Use resources, and learn from resources, to improve your performance. For example, visit <https://gettinggreatrates.com/Freebies> and download the “Rate Setting Best Practices Guide,” and the “ReplacementScheduler,” and

If a customer causes the utility to incur a cost, they should reimburse the utility for that cost. Achieve that and you have cost-to-serve rates. Easier said than done.

“CIP Planner” spreadsheets, among others.

Oh my, there are many, many excellent resources on-line. Just “Google” what you need and talk to people.

Director Ron is not going to cast you instead of Johnny Depp in his next movie. Too bad. It could have been a blockbuster. But you can still be a star to those who look to

The 40-Yard Dash of Rate Setting

Think of cost-to-serve rates in the game of rate setting like the 40-yard dash time in football. Running a fast 40 does not guarantee you will be a star football player. But it is a good predictor of how good a football player you may become.

In football, being fast is a good thing. In rate setting, being fair and adequate is a good thing, too. But not the only thing if you want to be a star.

you for excellent utility service. Make it happen. And show others how to help you make it happen. The End.

Carl Brown is President of GettingGreatRates.com, which specializes in water, sewer, and other utility rate analysis. The firm serves as

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across Wyoming

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