



A Merited “Thanks” to the IRWA Staff

By: Don Craig, IRWA Deputy Director

December 2023
Newsletter

As another year ends, I just wanted to take this opportunity to give a very special thanks to each of the IRWA staff for all they continue to do. The Association is as only good as the employees who work so diligently in each of our programs throughout the state of Illinois; and also, those providing the administration of the organization at our office in Taylorville, the IRWA Board of Directors....and, just as important, our member systems!

Illinois Rural Water Association has grown from two employees, 2 programs and a leased secretarial service, from when I started many years ago, to 17 program or administrative positions, with a total of 18 employees to date. It has been a remarkable growth for IRWA, as well as for all the state affiliates across the nation within the National Rural Water Association.

Within IRWA, our workforce are all good and dedicated people. Each of which are respectfully different individuals in their own right; but each still holding the same goal value of our mission statement... “Protecting and preserving the water and wastewater resources of rural Illinois through education, representation, and on-site technical assistance”. And, by doing so, our Association continues to be a strong and an integral player in assuring the systems we represent, that we will always work to that end.

Like I’ve always said... “We may not have all the answers, but we will ‘bust our butts’ to help you out, anyway that we can!” Basically, we are consultants that have a huge pool of expertise to pull from. This is not only from our own knowledge, skill, and experiences, but also input through all of our member systems, operators, administrators, associate members, etc. in

our state organization, and from rural water association affiliates across the country, as well.

Please take the time to thank any and all of our staff when you can, and continue to send letters of support, not only in regard to what they do in the field or at the office to assist you, but also to help relay the importance, need, and validity of our organization for small rural community systems throughout Illinois.

On that note... I have included a news release below, that just came out this past week, which is of huge importance in many ways for all of rural America; but specifically in “our world”, for the National Rural Water Association, all its state affiliates and their member systems.

Farm Bill Extended

One-year extension allows USDA to continue delivering critical programs

Nov 20, 2023

On November 16, 2023, Congress passed a stopgap bill to provide funding to federal agencies to avoid a government shutdown. Contained within that stopgap measure is an extension of the 2018 Farm Bill, which expired on September 30, 2023. The one-year extension, or to September 2024, allows the USDA to continue to operate and deliver programs critical to small and rural communities. This includes the Rural Utilities Service's Water and Wastewater Loan and Grant programs and State Rural Water Association Training and Technical Assistance, which rural communities rely on every day.



**HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE IRWA BOARD AND STAFF
AND BEST WISHES FOR A HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!**

IRWA'S MISSION STATEMENT

“Protecting and preserving the water and wastewater resources of Rural Illinois through education, representation and on-site technical assistance”

Technical Assistance Bulletin



Cybersecurity Requirements....not yet!

By: Steve Vance, IRWA Training & Technical Assistance Specialist

During recent training sessions conducted by Illinois Rural Water Association (IRWA), you may have heard Dave McMillan and I touch on the topic of cybersecurity. Our initial exposure to cybersecurity involved listening to a presentation by USEPA on our way home from IRWA's conference in Effingham last February. While neither of us could be remotely considered experts in anything related to computers or information technology (IT), we both had serious concerns regarding the proposed implementation of USEPA's cybersecurity requirements.

Shortly after that presentation, USEPA released a memorandum on March 3, 2023 titled, "Addressing PWS Cybersecurity in Sanitary Surveys or an Alternate Process". In that memorandum, it is explained how cybersecurity assessments were to be conducted through the sanitary survey process (more commonly known as an "inspection" in Illinois). It also details technical and financial resources made available to achieve compliance with the cybersecurity requirements.

USEPA contends in that memo that the regulatory framework was already in place for conducting cybersecurity assessments through the sanitary survey process and that revisions to the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) would not be necessary. This interpretation, while having some merit, did not address the concerns that Dave and I (and apparently, many other people) had. The American Water Works Association (AWWA) and the National Rural Water Association (NRWA) joined the states of Missouri, Arkansas, and Iowa in a legal challenge of USEPA's Cybersecurity Rule. Specifically, these entities challenged the legal process in which the Cybersecurity Rule was developed without industry input and expressed concerns related to the development and protection of sensitive information generated during the sanitary survey process. Additionally, and my primary concern, was the lack of expertise by primary agencies that would be required to conduct cybersecurity assessments during the Sanitary Survey.

As a result, USEPA rescinded the Cybersecurity Rule in a memorandum dated October 11, 2023. Given the importance of cybersecurity and the risks associated with not implementing sound security practices, AWWA and NRWA has pledged to work with USEPA in developing a sound and implementable means of addressing cybersecurity in the water sector. While the requirements that were initially proposed are currently on "hold", it is a consensus that efforts should still be taken to adopting cybersecurity best practices for the purpose of protecting public health and

sensitive information that may be at risk as cybersecurity attacks are real and occurring with more frequency. While the initial Cybersecurity Rule requirements are not being implemented, I think it is fair to assume that some kind of related rulemaking is in the foreseeable future. However, community water supplies should not wait to evaluate their systems to identify vulnerable avenues for cybercriminal intrusion. USEPA has developed guidance and generated a significant toolbox to assist in making systems less vulnerable. A simple Google search of "USEPA and Cybersecurity" generates a vast amount of related resources.

The cursory list below may provide some ideas to make your system a little safer, but, keep in mind, this is not a comprehensive list and may not make your system infallible.

- Enable automatic updates to make sure that all system software is up to date**
- Create a list of individuals that have access to your system and the level of access provided.**
- Watch for phishing. 80% of attacks are initiated through phishing. Phishing indicators include suspicious email addresses, typos, poor quality graphics, the presence of urgency in the phishing email.**
- Keep passwords updated. Use complex passwords with mixtures of characters, numbers and letters that create a password of at least 12 characters.**
- Don't use the same password for multiple accounts and don't use a default password that may have been provided by a vendor.**
- Use multi-factor authentication (MFA) where multiple verification factors are used for account access.**
- Perform frequent system backups and maintain those backups in a secure location.**

While the list above provides some simple ways to protect your system, USEPA can be contacted to perform a more comprehensive evaluation of your system that includes detailed recommendations for making it less likely to incur a cyber-attack.

So, the moral of the story is to not wait until cybersecurity regulations/requirements are developed to make your system safe(r) and when evaluating your system consider all avenues for potential intrusion, including SCADA systems, web-based applications, billing software, etc.

Hope to see you at one of our training sessions in the near future where updates regarding the status of the cybersecurity assessment requirements will be provided. Keep doing the good work!!!



Day In the Life

By: Roger Noe, IRWA Circuit Rider

I often get asked what my job duties are or what types of things comprise my day. As a Circuit Rider, I am responsible for 38 counties in the Southernmost area of Illinois. Usually I schedule my days, however, circumstances can change based on requests and emergencies. I'll take you through a "typical" day in the life so you can get a snapshot of my job.

7:00 a.m. Pack my lunch then I'm out the door and in the truck. I'm headed to meet an operator at the master meter site where chlorine and ammonia are injected.

7:30 a.m. We tested the water to determine the chlorine and ammonia ratio. From that result we could set the proper ratio for the chemical to be fed. We discussed running water samples to determine if we had the proper ratio in the northern part of their system later this year.

9:00 am. Arrived at City of Fairfield Water Plant. I worked to resolve a compliance issue on the operator's monthly report to the IEPA. Located the manual for the plant's turbidity meters and reviewed the calibration process with staff. Suggested they request a representative from the equipment supplier for a refresher demonstration.

10:30 a.m. Arrived Village of West Salem Water Plant. Discussed lead and copper inventory requirement that will

be implemented in February 2024 by IEPA. I suggested ways to get the information that is required from homeowners and the process of how to complete the template.

12:00 p.m. Ate my lunch in the truck on the way to the Village of Belmont.

12:30 p.m. At Belmont, we talked about the chlorine issues in their water tower. I suggested increasing the fill time on their tanks to minimize the drop in residuals. An electrician arrived to investigate work to be done at the request of the Village. While he was there, we discussed some options to improve the information from their SCADA.

2:45 p.m. Arrived back at my home office. Checked and returned emails and did some follow up phone calls. Once those were finished I planned out my next day.

On this particular day, I traveled through three counties and back and forth on Route 15. I spoke with six different utility workers and visited four different sites. In actuality, this was small, close to home day. Typically my days accrue many more miles.

Being a Circuit Rider requires flexibility, time management, and knowledge of the water industry.



Upcoming IRWA Training Sessions—Please look on our website at www.ilrwa.org for the most up to date training sessions.

JANUARY 10, 2024	CONGERVILLE	WWT
JANUARY 22, 2024	MATTOON	DWT
JANUARY 23, 2024	JACKSONVILLE	DWT
FEBRUARY 6, 2024	DANVILLE	DWT
FEBRUARY 14, 2024	PERU	WWT
MARCH 5, 2024	EAST ALTON	DWT
MARCH 12, 2024	BOURBONNAIS	DWT
MARCH 20, 2024	OBLONG	WWT
APRIL 2, 2024	MACOMB	DWT
APRIL 10, 2024	EFFINGHAM	DWT
APRIL 17, 2024	ANNA	WWT
MAY 7, 2024	FREEPORT	DWT
MAY 8, 2024	PRINCETON	DWT

Illinois Rural Water Association
3305 Kennedy Road
P.O. Box 49
Taylorville, IL 62568
217-287-2115

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SPRINGFIELD, IL
PERMIT NO. 500



QUALITY ON TAP

IRWA Staff Members

Executive Director

Frank Dunmire (dunmire@ilrwa.org)

Deputy Director

Don Craig (craig@ilrwa.org)

Membership Services Assistant

Heather McLeod (ilrwahm@ilrwa.org)

Administrative/Program Assistant

Denise Burke (ilrwadb@ilrwa.org)

Circuit Rider #1

Evan Jones (jones@ilrwa.org)

Circuit Rider #2

Roger Noe (noe@ilrwa.org)

Circuit Rider #3

Chuck Woodworth (ilrwacw@ilrwa.org)

Circuit Rider #4

Marc Lemrise (lemrise@ilrwa.org)

Wastewater Technician #1

Jeff McCready (mccready@ilrwa.org)

Wastewater Technician #2

Scott Tozier (tozier@ilrwa.org)

USDA Source Water Protection Specialist

Richmond Adams (adams@ilrwa.org)

State Funded EPA Technician

Clark Cameron (cameron@ilrwa.org)

Energy Efficiency Circuit Rider

Dave Speagle (speagle@ilrwa.org)

EPA Training Specialist

Dave McMillian (mcmillan@ilrwa.org)

Steve Vance (vance@ilrwa.org)

EPA WW Training Specialist

Kent Cox (cox@ilrwa.org)

Apprenticeship Coordinator

Jeff Tumiatì (tumiatì@ilrwa.org)

Compliance Assistance Specialist

Mary Reed (reed@ilrwa.org)



42nd Annual Technical Conference



LOADING...

February 20 - 22, 2024

Mark your calendar for next year's annual technical conference at the Keller Convention Center in Effingham, Illinois. Exhibitor registration opened in late November and attendees are able to begin registering now. Keep watching our website and social media pages for updates.