



Change

By: Frank Dunmire, IRWA Executive Director

**March 2022
Newsletter**

The past couple of years have been quite a struggle to say the least. It was right at two years ago when the whole world was beginning to realize there was a new virus out there that was rapidly spreading from country to country – eventually encompassing the entire world. This virus, thought to have its origins in China, proved to be deadly and could rapidly mutate. Businesses were shut down, travel came to a screeching halt, and, to date, it has been reported that over 431 million people contracted the virus – with nearly 6 million of those perishing. Of the worldwide cases, it was reported that about 3 million of those were right here in Illinois, with approximately 37,000 deaths. I think everyone reading this article has had a friend or relative test positive for the virus or has lost a friend or relative. I know I have known (and lost) some friends to the virus.

It has been a long two-year battle to get to where we are today, but it appears that we are on the brink of beginning to return to some degree of pre-pandemic normalcy. Illinois Governor, J.B. Pritzker, lifted the requirement for wearing face coverings in most indoor spaces to slow the spread of COVID-19, left in place was the mask mandate for K-12 schools where students, teachers and staff are clustered together. As of this writing, the courts are reviewing and weighing-in on the mask mandate. Furthermore, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is poised to announce a change to the criteria used to determine recommending the wearing of face masks. Instead of looking only at COVID-19 case counts it will now take “a more holistic view of risk from the coronavirus to a community.” Under current guidelines, roughly 95% of counties in the United States fall under masking recommendations. Under the new guidelines, most Americans will no longer live in areas where indoor masking is recommended.

As these new changes are implemented, IRWA is also beginning to change how in-person training sessions are being conducted. Planning stages for the upcoming Training and Technical Assistance (T&TA) programs is underway and the biggest change is going to be returning to larger training venues that will allow for more Operations Specialist attendance. New this year will be a second training specialist for drinking water and an entirely new T&TA program specifically for Wastewater Operation Specialists.

IRWA is pleased to announce that it has expanded its drinking water T&TA program by adding another part-time trainer. Steve Vance, recently retired from IEPA as Field Opera-

tions Section Manager, started with the IRWA on February 1, 2022. Steve will join Dave McMillan in planning and implementing training sessions throughout the state. Both Steve and Dave possess a wealth of knowledge that they are eager to share with Water Operations Specialists across Illinois. Keep an out for training brochures hitting your mailboxes and check the IRWA website often as training sessions are posted.

New this year will be a T&TA program for Wastewater Operations Specialists. This program, which was slated to roll out on March 1st, has been delayed by red tape in Washington DC. We are in hopes that the program will get the green light by April 1st so that formal planning efforts can take place. IRWA has already filled the full-time position as Wastewater T&TA Specialist, and he is poised to hit the ground running as soon as the ink is dry on the formal grant agreement with the USEPA and NRWA. Donning the WW T&TA cap will be former Source Water Protection Specialist, Kent Cox. Kent requested to transfer over to the new position seeing a challenge to take a new program and build it into a successful one such as the drinking water T&TA. I am confident that Kent will be able to take on the challenge successfully as he has the knowledge and eagerness to pass on his passion for protecting the waterways of Illinois through proper treatment of wastewater.

With Kent moving over to the WW T&TA position, that left a vacancy in the Source Water Protection Program. I am pleased to announce that Chuck Ewen of Macomb, IL has been selected to step in to head up the SW Protection Program. Chuck spent the past 14 years as a Water Operations Specialist with the City of Macomb and is looking forward to taking the existing program and expanding upon it.

Finally, while we are talking changes – IRWA Energy Efficiency Technician, Brandon Windell, decided to make a career change and left the IRWA at the conclusion of this year’s annual conference held last month in Effingham. Stepping in to fill the void left after Brandon’s departure is Mr. David Speagle of Taylorville, IL. David has over 35 years in the water field – the last 20 years as Water Superintendent for the City of Taylorville and will start his new career with the IRWA on March 7th.

A big welcome to those that are joining the IRWA family and heartfelt best wishes to Brandon as he embarks on his career change.

IRWA'S MISSION STATEMENT

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

**Water
Quality
Protection
Program
Assistance
Program
Training
Program**



WASTEWATER CEU REQUIREMENTS - UPDATE

By: Jeff McCready, IRWA Wastewater Technician

With the first cycle of Wastewater Certification Renewal Requirements ending in a few months, and with a lot of questions about it still being asked, I thought we should revisit the subject again. One of the questions asked most often is "How are we supposed to send our CEU's we've obtained to the IEPA for renewal?"

The following is from the IEPA's **New Operator Certification Unit**.

Certification Renewal Training Requirements

Fully Certified wastewater operators are required to obtain a specific amount of training in order to qualify for certification renewal.

Training must be obtained during the three year period before the expiration date.

Class 1 and 2:

30 hours of renewal training required
No more than 10 hours of professional/non-technical nature

Class 3 and 4:

15 hours of renewal training required
No more than 5 hours of professional/non-technical nature

It is acceptable to have all of your hours be technical if that's what you have acquired.

Renewal Deadlines

Class 1 and 2:

If certified before 7/1/2020:

Expiration date = 7/1/2023

If certified after 7/1/2020:

Expiration date = July 1, 3 years after certification was issued

Class 3 and 4

If certified before 7/1/2019:

Expiration date = 7/1/2022

If certified after 7/1/2019:

Expiration date = July 1, 3 years after certification was issued

Renewal Notification

In the spring of the year you are set to expire, you will be mailed a renewal application.

Prior to July 1st:

The renewal application form must be completed, signed and returned to the Illinois EPA. You must send the records of your

training (make sure you keep a copy for yourself and are required to keep them for 5 years) If the Agency does not receive all of the required elements for renewal, the certification expires July 1.

Renewal Training

New courses should have a prefix before the course title

WWT – wastewater, technical

WWN – wastewater, non-technical

DWT – drinking water, technical

DWN – drinking water, non-technical

DCT – dual credit, technical

DCN – dual credit, non-technical

Industrial Certification

Class K and R certifications are valid for 5 years

If issued before 7/1/2019

Expiration date = 7/1/2024

No renewals – you must retest

Certification Restoration

After July 1:

You can still get your certification back but it becomes a Restoration. All of the requirements for renewal must be met for training and the renewal application must be completed and returned to the agency with original signature. You have up to 2 years to restore your certificate. If your certification is restored, your next renewal date is the same date that it would have been, had you renewed the certificate on time. If do not renew or restore your certificate, it remains expired. After two years if you decide you need to be certified, you have to start over. You must submit an exam request and pass the exam in order to re-certify. Collection Systems certificates do not expire.

Here is a new phone number and e-mail address for the Certification Unit: 217-785-0561

Email: epaoperatorcertification@illinois.gov

How many operators are out there:

Class 1	-	1,791
Class 2	-	1,118
Class 3	-	1,512
Class 4	-	3,844
Collection System	-	491
Class K	-	7,223
Class R	-	384

THE IRWA OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED THE FOLLOWING UPCOMING HOLIDAYS:

Monday, May 30

Memorial Day

Monday, July 4

Independence Day





All the Way from New York to Illinois

By: **Scott Tozier, IRWA Wastewater Technician**

The first question I hear all the time in my travels every time I get to introduce myself is “why did you come to Illinois all the way from NY?” Well, I can say it wasn’t a hard decision and let me tell you why. In the late summer of 2020 my daughter came to my wife and I and said I’m quitting my job and moving to Illinois; we were like um what? It seems that she fell for this guy that just happened to also be from NY but moved to Illinois to fulfill his life-long dream of being a deer hunting guide and outfitter. As the story continues, she calls us up after a few months and says, “guess what? I’m pregnant and were getting married”, kids these days, right? It just so happened that I was on my final year and getting ready to retire from New York state after 34 years as a chief operator for a mid-sized township and my wife says, “guess what we’re doing?” Let me guess you’re retiring to spend time with your new grand daughter and I’m looking for a job in Illinois, right? Yup. Fast forward thru a summer of huge changes in 2021 I have a healthy happy granddaughter and I found a job doing what I wanted to do in my retirement, which is helping other operators out and teaching them what others had taught me. By the way I’m a huge Whitetail deer hunter and my new son-in-law leases over 10,000 acres so it wasn’t too huge a decision to move to the land of giants that I have read about all my life.

Let me back track a bit and introduce myself since most of you haven’t met me. I graduated college where I met my wife and decided what I needed was a job. My degree was in Fisheries and Wildlife and there aren’t many jobs in that field unless you want to move to New York city and I had no desire to do that being a kid from a small northern NY town which was full of rivers and streams and deer running around. So, I started with a Food processing plant, and they saw I had a degree, so they put me in charge of their wastewater lagoon treatment system and fast forward again at the age of 21 started with a mid-sized municipality working putting in water mains and services and also filling in at the Water and Wastewater plants.

As luck would have it, after 4 years of doing all these jobs the Chief Wastewater plant operator was retiring and I was lucky enough, at the ripe age of 25, to be the new chief. Well as things go in smallish towns, I was the young chief that had a lot to learn and I soon found out that I needed to learn my stuff or I wouldn’t survive this job because I was the young guy now making what guys that had been there a lot of years were making so I was a target of I guess jealousy because I moved up so fast.

I’ve never been much for losing as I grew up playing team sports on some very good teams over my high school years, so I set out to find who knew in NYS the most about wastewater treatment since apparently this was my career path, not exactly what I had envisioned coming out of college but hey you must make a living doing something, right? As luck would have it, New York state has what they call Department of Environmental Conservation just like the EPA in Illinois. It just so happened they had this section of DEC called the FOAS, Facility Operation Assistance Sec-

tion, and they gave 1 week and 2 week training sessions for troubleshooting and operation of treatment plants. Me being lucky again I had a boss that truly was in favor of further education, and he sent me over the years to many of these classes. I learned how to walk into a plant that I didn’t know, look at the data, talk to the different operators, managers, politicians, etc., and assess what the issue was. Mind you, these were scenarios from plants that they had already been to, and these guys usually didn’t go to places that weren’t in pretty bad shape.

I learned a lot from those guys in the DEC and can call a few of them friends now that they long since retired from the state. I truly enjoyed doing these sessions and always wanted to do this kind of training full time even though over 34 years I have trained at least 6 operators that have come and gone. Many of these operators had varying levels of enthusiasm but I felt all of them, after spending time at the treatment plant, had a greater respect for the complexity of the wastewater treatment processes.

In small or mid-sized systems, you not only have to be operator but mechanic, chemist, biologist, MEO and grounds keeper all in one. I think this is what has made me feel like being a Wastewater Tech for IRWA is the perfect job for me – because, in a way, I have always done all those things. Even though I’ve had some reluctant assistants to do certain jobs over the years, who could blame them at a sewer treatment plant? I have always tried to help do the nasty jobs, just so they could see that if I was willing to do them how could they not?

So far in my travels I’ve been met by the nicest people I could ever meet, I was really worried that everyone would think that if I were from the state of New York, then I must be from New York City. My fears of that idea preceding me were unfounded as I have found that apparently everyone outside Illinois thinks that if you’re from Illinois then you must be from Chicago - right? I am really impressed with the hard-working men and women I’ve met so far and how they are all the “Jack of all Trades” professionals. Small village and city workers do everything - streets, grounds, water, wastewater and whatever else pops up. It is truly impressive how it all gets done.

So, in the next few months, as I get a chance to stop in and introduce myself (and hopefully talk some hunting and fishing), let me know what I can do to hopefully take some of the load off of your backs that are so heavily loaded these days.

See you soon!

**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



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

Chuck Ewen (ewen@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 Tumiafi (tumiafi@ilrwa.org)