

FIRST QUARTER 2010

NATIONAL RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION

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VOLUME 31, NUMBER 1

1978 & NATIONAL RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION
WaterPro
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H2OxPO



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Does Size Really Matter?

BY DANNY LYNDALL, OPERATIONS MANAGER,
DAPHNE UTILITIES, DAPHNE, ALABAMA



Attending H2O-XPO is a Smart Move Whether Your Utility is Large or Small

IN THESE TIMES of economic uncertainty, many utilities – large and small – are looking for ways to trim their budgets. New construction projects have slowed dramatically, and cost-conscious consumers are cutting back on their personal expenditures. As a result, utility companies' revenues are down, and reigning back on expenses is required. Unfortunately, education and travel expenses are usually among the first of these budget cuts.

But cutting educational expenses in the name of saving money is counterproductive. Certified operators and engineers are required to maintain a certain number of continuing education hours throughout the year to stay in compliance with certain laws and to continue to work in their chosen field. If you don't provide these opportunities for your certified operators to get the training they are required to have, they will be forced to seek out their own opportunities – possibly even at a competing utility!

In addition to this, employees who are well trained in the latest methods and compliance techniques are much more engaged than those employees being trained at the bare minimum level. This is due, in part, to the fact that well-trained employees hold in their own hands the power to make themselves a natural success at their jobs every single day. This increased engagement is a real added-value multiplier of your labor costs, which can go a long way towards helping you wring the most out of your shrinking budget dollars.

Moreover, only attending local courses to attain the minimum required continuing education hours is no longer enough to effectively remain

in compliance in the ever-changing world of federal and state regulations, which affect everything from drinking water quality standards to system security and privacy of customer data. Attending trade conferences – both local and national – is one of the most cost-effective training a utility manager can provide for his or her employees. Where else can your utility employees have the opportunity to network with their regulatory agencies, get the most up-to-date information on the latest laws affecting the industry and meet the vendors who can provide the solutions needed to operate your utility economically and within all regulatory limits?

Attending a national trade conference such as the National Rural Water Association H2O-XPO is an opportunity unlike one you can get at a local trade show. Here, you will find the equipment vendors and manufacturers who, facing the same tight budgets, will choose to display their products at a venue with a much larger attendance than at a local conference. A national conference also gives you the opportunity to personally meet the representatives of the regulatory agencies who are responsible for laws and rules under which you must conduct your utility operation. Finally, networking with one's peers in the industry also gives you the opportunity to learn firsthand how a problem you have may have been solved by someone else.



THE UTILITY PERSPECTIVE

At Daphne Utilities, we give our employees every chance to attend trade conferences, recognizing that this is one of the most cost-effective training and morale building exercises we can provide. Without fail, those employees who have attended a large, national conference such as the National Rural Water Association H2O-XPO, AWWA or WEF have returned to their jobs with a whole new respect for the industry and a renewed vigor and energy towards their chosen profession.

Providing high quality utility services at economical rates is the most basic thing we do in the utilities industry. Training our employees on the latest methods to effectively do this not only benefits our utility and its customers, it also yields a more highly engaged employee as well...just the type that will go the extra mile to keep your utility running smoothly and efficiently. With tightening belts comes the need to "do much more with much less." The training

they can receive at a national conference like NRWA's H2O-XPO is one of the most cost-effective ways for a utility to accomplish this critical task, enabling you to remain in compliance, maintain affordable rates for your customers and meet the demands of an ever-changing market. ○

Danny Lyndall is the operations manager of Daphne Utilities in Daphne, Alabama. He has held this position for four years after previously managing facilities operations for Tulane University in New Orleans, La., Spring Hill College in Mobile, Ala. and a major outlet shopping mall. A lifelong resident of the Alabama Gulf Coast, he is active in several business and civic associations including the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce and local Rotary and Kiwanis organizations.



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"You know, I have looked at some of that equipment in magazines for years... but I've never seen it up close until I attended [NRWA]! That was really exciting to open it up and really get my hands on it!"

– Larry Jackson,
Field Services Manager for Daphne Utilities

"I was able to meet a representative from the EPA and got a chance to really hear the reasons why the new Ground Water Rule was being implemented. I had no idea how water customers in other parts of the country were being affected by this!"

– Larry English,
Water Quality Manager for Daphne Utilities

"I met this operator at dinner one night and was explaining to him about an odor issue we were having at a sewage pumping station. I was asking him about an odor control product I had seen on the trade show floor and if he had ever used it... He explained to me a really simple solution that was not only cheaper, but much more effective!"

– Jim Caudle,
Water Reclamation Manager for
Daphne Utilities