



WATER TAP

WASHINGTON'S DRINKING WATER NEWSLETTER

December 31 Deadline: Professional growth for waterworks operators and backflow assembly testers

In May, we sent reminder letters to all certified waterworks operators and backflow assembly testers (BAT) who still need to meet the Department of Health's professional growth requirement by December 31, 2009. This is the last notification you will receive before the deadline.

If you were certified before January 1, 2007, you must meet the professional growth requirement by December 31, 2009. **If you DO NOT meet the requirement by the December 31 deadline, you will NOT be able to:**

- Renew your certification for 2010, or
- Appeal the inactivation of your certificate.

Waterworks Operators

Most waterworks operators meet the requirement by completing relevant training and earning at least 3.0 continuing education units or college credits. You may also meet the requirement by passing specific types of certification exams.

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Revised operator certification law

This year, the Department of Health (DOH) asked the Legislature to clarify the law that gives us authority to regulate certified waterworks operators (chapter 70.119 Revised Code of Washington).

Previously, this law did not clearly define our authority to certify certain types of operators and to respond to operator violations.



The lack of clarity in the old law could endanger public health protection by limiting our ability to certify particular operators and to enforce penalties when gross violations occur. Our concern was resolved when the Legislature passed and Governor Gregoire signed Enrolled Substitute House Bill 1283.

We certify more than 5,800 public water system operators. These operators are responsible for the day-to-day operation and management of their water systems. Their work includes ensuring the water their systems provide is safe to drink, and responding appropriately to protect their customers' health when something goes wrong.

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THE DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

BY DENISE ADDOTTA CLIFFORD



What lies ahead for small water systems

A year ago, I told you the state Legislature had asked us to study small drinking water systems that are failing or likely to fail.

Such systems often require state intervention to resolve threats to public health and safety.

As I write this in July, we're wrapping up the study. We'll present our findings to legislators this winter. In the meantime, here's a little background for perspective.

Since 2003, the Legislature has appropriated more than \$18 million to address urgent health threats posed by failing water systems. Small systems, defined as those serving fewer than 1,000 households, face several challenges:

- **Technical:** Compared to larger water systems, small systems are more likely to have water quality violations and less likely to monitor for contaminants, make timely repairs, or replace faulty materials. This can lead to poor water quality, unreliable water, and failing infrastructure, all of which can pose significant health risks to customers.
- **Managerial:** Owners and board members of small water associations do not always fully understand their responsibilities to ensure delivery of safe, reliable drinking water.
- **Financial:** Their smaller rate base puts small water systems at a significant financial disadvantage. They must bear relatively higher per-capita costs to meet regulatory requirements and maintain infrastructure, because fewer customers share the expenses.

For the past 30 years, the Legislature and State Board of Health have tried to limit creation of small water systems when possible. They even directed new water system applicants to a satellite management agency that could own or operate the newly created water system.

Our report to the Legislature builds on those efforts by proposing the following changes:

- Reduce the growth of new water systems. For example, we think developers should request water service from an existing utility that serves the area before seeking approval to create a new Group A community water system.

Tell us what you think

We recently met with large and medium water systems about options for revisiting our operating permit fee structure, which hasn't changed since 1991. Now we'd like to meet with *groups* of small water systems. We invite you to send us your thoughts about how we can meet with small water systems in your area. Please e-mail your comments to Donna Lynch, outreach coordinator, at donna.lynch@doh.wa.gov or call (360) 236-3167.

- Ensure new water systems have an ownership structure that will help them succeed. We believe public or satellite management agency ownership may be good options for new water systems.
- Improve our oversight of water systems' financial health, and align resources to help systems in need. We're considering program changes to help us better evaluate our capacity to do that, including how to keep customers informed.

While the goal is to focus on early intervention, we also want to work with the Legislature, State Board of Health, and others to determine how best to help failing systems headed toward receivership. Receivership is a situation that requires a new entity to legally take over a water system. We'd like to change the receivership laws to improve our ability to find workable solutions for these systems and their customers.

Changes also loom at the federal level. I recently spoke to the National Drinking Water Advisory Council, an advisory group to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, about our ideas for addressing the problems of small water systems. The Council spent an entire day on small water system issues. That group, led by our own Assistant Secretary for Environmental Health, Gregg Grunenfelder, will likely make recommendations for small water system management to EPA.

Meanwhile, we hope to go over our recommendations with state legislators before the 2010 legislative session begins in January. We'll keep you updated as this process moves along.

Denise A. Clifford

State Revolving Fund Grows Great Funding Opportunity at Great Low Rates

The 13-year-old Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) is growing, thanks to increasing repayments and interest, and higher-than-usual federal contributions. With a growing fund, your application has a better chance of being funded.

The DWSRF loan program's primary purpose is to protect the health of the people of Washington by ensuring safe and reliable drinking water. We do that by providing low-interest loans for water system construction projects that increase public health protection and compliance with drinking water regulations.

The low rates and relatively easy terms of the DWSRF program have helped hundreds of water systems around Washington.

We will consider all infrastructure construction projects that meet the basic eligibility criteria. We use a priority ranking system to score projects with public health protection and compliance projects scoring highest.

We contacted eligible Economic Recovery applicants that did not receive funding to offer them a chance to roll over their application and score for consideration this fall. These systems do not have to submit a new application.

The deadline for all other applications is October 5. You can download the program guidelines and application at http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/our_main_pages/dwsrf.htm



If you have questions about the program, call Kitty Weisman at (360) 236-3116 or e-mail kitty.weisman@doh.wa.gov



Professional Growth Deadline... (Continued from Page 1)

Backflow Assembly Testers

If you are a BAT, you only have to pass the department's professional growth exam to meet your requirement. There is no training required to apply for an exam.

The Department of Health ensures there are enough exams scheduled throughout the three-year reporting period to accommodate all certified BATs. More than 50 percent of BATs wait until the last six months of the reporting period to apply for an exam. So, the longer you wait, the greater the chance exams may already be full. **If you wait until December to take an exam and do not pass, you may not be able to get into another one before the December 31 deadline.**

Questions?

Visit Washington Certification Services online at <http://www.wacertservices.org> to:

- Check your waterworks professional growth transcript.
- Learn more about waterworks exam options for meeting the requirement.
- Get the most current BAT exam schedules, applications, and procedures.

For help, call Washington Certification Services at Green River Community College at (253) 288-3357, or toll-free (877) 780-2444.

Don't be afraid to enlist news media to communicate in emergencies

Water system operators, managers and owners can find themselves in front of the TV cameras when disaster strikes. We asked Donn Moyer, media relations manager for the Department of Health, for his thoughts about working with the news media and some tips on how to handle interviews.

Water Tap: *In many situations, the news media can help water systems get public notifications out during drinking water emergencies. What are your thoughts about the news media as messenger?*



Donn Moyer

Donn Moyer: News media offer fairly quick, virtually free access to a broad audience you'd normally have to pay to reach. Most news consumers are water system customers; some may know people on water systems affected by emergencies. We can use the media as a supplement to

formal notification. For the agency, part of our duty is to be THE credible, reliable voice of public health. Telling people about emerging health issues is part of that role.

WT: *What are the risks of enlisting the news media to help communicate during a drinking water emergency? You can't control what the media report, and sometimes they get it wrong.*

DM: Media get to choose which stories are covered, and they may decide not to cover your story. There's always a chance some information will be incomplete or incorrect, but that's rare if you provide them clear, concise information. If there's controversy, the "other side" will have a voice, and you cannot control what's said. We also don't control what's reported. Most reporters try to get it right, though.

WT: *Can you suggest ways to increase the chance they'll report accurately?*

DM: Reporters want to be accurate — it's about their own credibility. You can help them be accurate. News releases and interview comments should be short, simple, and clear. Talk to reporters like you would your neighbor or someone in the seat next to you on an airplane. Avoid jargon, acronyms, initials and abbreviations. Cover the basics: what happened, when, and how. Clearly explain who's affected. Tell customers

what they should do, and why. Messages should include what's being done to fix the problem, and how long it's going to take — but don't speculate! If you don't know, say so.

WT: *If the news media reports on a problem with a water system, will the customers and boards of directors lose faith in its operators?*

DM: On the contrary. It should help to build your credibility by showing you'll let people know if there's a problem, and tell them how to protect themselves. Of course, news interviews and news releases don't replace formal public notice when that's needed. Directors and officials would likely know about an incident firsthand. Providing simple, clear, accurate, timely information should strengthen customer faith in you.

WT: *What advice would you give a water system operator who has no experience dealing with the news media and no communications staff to help?*

DM: Operators in our state are fortunate because the Office of Drinking Water has skilled people ready to help. Our agency's Communications Office is also helpful, skilled, willing, and easy to find. We'll help you with your news release; and when we prepare an agency news release, operators typically are asked for input. If you're going to talk to a reporter, take a moment to gather your thoughts and take a deep breath. Jot down the three or four key things you want people to know — nothing fancy, just a simple outline. Then follow it, and remember to talk in simple, everyday words rather than technical language.

WT: *Do you believe the benefits of working with the news media outweigh the risks? If so, why (or why not)?*

DM: The risk is low to start with, and there may be a higher risk of trying to avoid working with media — especially if there's concern about thorough notification. Reporters have a job to do, and so do all of us. In this field, getting your messages to people through news reports is another way of telling people things that might keep them from getting sick or even dying. That's a good reason to be ready to use news media opportunities that arise.

WT: *What if they show up with TV cameras and you've never been on TV before?*

DM: As with any interview, ask for a moment to gather your thoughts. When you're first asked to go on-camera, ask for a general idea of the questions you'll be asked. Remember that they won't stick to them, and that's okay;

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Whidbey Island water systems team up for success

Have you ever wondered what your neighboring water systems are doing?

Form a group to find out! On Whidbey Island, folks did just that.

The Whidbey Island Water Systems Association formed in 2004 to provide its members a clearinghouse of information on water systems. Members share information with each other on technical topics, system operations and new rules.

The Association is open to all water purveyors, including private well owners. It:

- Keeps members informed about government and industry meetings.
- Creates a forum for knowledge and action for Whidbey Island systems.
- Informs members about training opportunities.

In April 2009, the Office of Drinking Water recognized the Whidbey Water Association with a certificate of appreciation for its "hard work and dedication to open communication between small system owners, operators and board members."

The Whidbey Island Water Systems Association is a model of successful organization worth repeating in your area.



Whidbey Island Water Systems Association was recognized for fostering open communication between owners, operators and board members. Above, back row from left, Leroy Cook, Greg Cane, Malcolm Bishop, Dean Theim. Front row, Dorothy Brotherson, Robert Brotherson, Sally Buckingham, Joe Waldrup.

WaterSense to create standards for building a water efficient single-family home

Looking to buy a new house? Soon it will be easy to make the water-efficient choice just by looking for the WaterSense label. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is creating specifications to encourage homebuilders to construct water-efficient single-family residences.

These new homes will reduce water use by about 20 percent through efficient plumbing fixtures, hot water delivery, appliances, landscape design, and irrigation systems.

At this level of efficiency, households can save more than 10,000 gallons of water per year. WaterSense-labeled new homes will also realize significant energy savings, due to the reduced amount of hot water used.

WaterSense also will educate homeowners about water efficiency.

EPA is finalizing its specifications for water-efficient single-family homes, including developing a system for independent, third-party inspection of homes that apply for the WaterSense label. When the specifications are complete, EPA will start working with builder partners, who may begin constructing and promoting WaterSense-labeled new homes as early as this year.

Are you interested in constructing water-efficient, single-family residences within your service area? Please visit <http://www.epa.gov/watersense/specs/homes.htm> for more detailed information.



Intentional Contamination of a Water System

Last summer, a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center in Washington state asked for help responding to intentional contamination of its water system. The response to this situation was an excellent example of multiple agencies working together to resolve an emergency. Among other things, responders learned how tricky it can be to negotiate what information can be shared with the public, and what information must be protected to preserve a criminal investigation.

The rehabilitation center's water system serves about 50 people, including 10 staff and 40 residential clients. After the three-day Memorial Day weekend in 2008, residents complained that their showers smelled of gasoline. Water from several sinks had a foamy brown color and also smelled of petroleum. Maintenance personnel inspected the well and the reservoir and found:

- The lock on the concrete well enclosure was broken.
- A strong odor of gasoline was coming from the well casing.
- The wellhead vent pipe was broken.
- There were oil residuals on and around the wellhead.
- An oily sheen was floating on top of the water in the reservoir.
- There was a strong petroleum odor within the reservoir.

Center staff called the county health department, which in turn contacted the Office of Drinking Water (ODW). We issued a "Do Not Drink" order to the system. The reservoir and well were closed at the valve so that no water would go to the facility. Center staff contracted for bottled water, and portable shower and toilet units, which were kept in place for the duration of the emergency.

ODW had the water system operator collect volatile organic chemical (VOC) samples from the wellhead and the reservoir. Initial VOC samples showed low levels of toluene, xylene, and benzene. The scum layer on the reservoir tested high for many of these chemicals. These tests and the gasoline smell at the well made it obvious a vandal had intentionally contaminated the water system. The center contacted the county sheriff's office and a detective was assigned to the case.

Because of the criminal investigation, the sheriff's office asked the facility and ODW staff not to release the test results to the public. This request led to a

series of conversations between health officials and the sheriff's office about the need to release information to protect public health versus the need to preserve key information related to the criminal investigation.

There were two conflicting aspects of releasing sensitive information about the incident.

1. Sheriff's officers were protecting information necessary to continue with the criminal investigation and did not want us to disclose pertinent details, such as the nature of the material introduced into the well.
2. Health officials felt considerable pressure to release information to interested parties. Residents were fearful for their health, and neighboring households wanted to gauge whether their water was also at risk. Reporters were persistent in their inquiries.

Through a collaborative effort, a multi-agency team developed procedures that worked for both sides. The team included the county sheriff's office, the county health department, the Department of Ecology, and ODW.

For example, when we drafted the first news release about the incident, we asked the sheriff's office for review. The sheriff's office asked us to remove the phrase "petroleum product" from the description of the suspected contaminant. Only the responders and the perpetrator knew this information, so protecting it was critical to the investigation.

A second example involved sharing information with the neighbors in homes surrounding the rehabilitation center. All depend on wells for their drinking water. We felt the neighbors had a right to know what happened at the center, and how it could potentially affect the drinking water in their wells. A short conference call with the sheriff's office and the county health department helped us decide how to proceed.

The police were confident the neighbors were not involved with the incident and were satisfied that sharing certain information with them would not harm their investigation. We drafted letters explaining the circumstances and what to look for in the unlikely event the contamination had spread to their well. Our media relations group coordinated news releases and health advisories through close collaboration with the sheriff's office and local health officials. The county health

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Mutual aid program can save time, money, headaches

When disasters strike, the Washington Water-Wastewater Agency Response Network (WA-WARN) can save you precious time and money.

If your drinking water or wastewater utility hasn't signed up for the mutual aid network, now is a good time to join. The past two winters brought heavy rain and snow, floods, damaging winds, and power outages. Most utilities don't have enough back-up generators and other equipment to fully function in a major outage.

Under a WARN agreement, participating utilities not affected by a storm or other disaster lend equipment and staff to help a system that is damaged recover more quickly and cheaply than it could on its own.

Colorado's WARN experience

The WARN system's value was clearly illustrated in 2008 when the Colorado community of Alamosa experienced a Salmonella outbreak that killed one person and made more than 400 people sick. After the bacteria was traced to the water system, the 10,000-resident community was placed on a boil/bottled water advisory that lasted 24 days.

Colorado's mutual aid network (Co-WARN) gave the town immediate and affordable access to specialized resources that enabled them to quickly resume water service, said Ron Falco, manager of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's Safe Drinking Water Program.

"Procuring these resources from other sources would have significantly increased the duration of the boil- or bottled-water order, as well as the chances of exposure to Salmonella," Falco said. "Without Co-WARN, the community would have incurred far greater negative economic effects, because many restaurants, daycare centers and other businesses were forced to close during much of the response period.

"Furthermore, most of the resources Co-WARN provided were free. That would not have been the case if Alamosa had contracted with outside vendors," he said. "Specifically, Co-WARN members provided distribution system operators who rapidly assisted with disinfection and flushing the water system."

Join Washington WARN

It takes specialized skills, abilities, equipment, and tools to run drinking water and wastewater systems, so

it makes sense for utilities to help each other through emergencies. By joining the WA-WARN network before an emergency, you'll know ahead of time what assistance you can count on and what's expected of you.

The free program offers a number of benefits:

- Faster arrival of support during a disaster.
- Increased emergency preparedness and coordination.
- Faster recovery from an emergency.
- Established procedures and costs before an incident occurs.
- Lower insurance costs.
- Reduced need for on-hand emergency supplies.

Through training, lessons learned, and experiences other WARN participants share, member utilities improve their ability to respond to emergencies. WARN organizations typically conduct training and emergency response planning sessions.

Although membership is free, there are costs associated with the program, such as staff time to attend meetings, legal and planning costs, communication costs and National Incident Management System (NIMS) compliance. Agreements drawn up ahead of time spell out reimbursement details for utilities that respond to another utility's emergency. The agreements also include legal issues, such as worker's compensation, insurance and liability.

Mary Smith, who coordinates Colorado's WARN network, said the single greatest benefit of taking part in WARN "is the peace of mind the utility and the community have knowing that immediate, affordable, and professional help is available during a time of crisis."

How to sign up

More than 32 Washington utilities have signed up for the WA-WARN program so far.

To learn more about the program, contact:

Gregory McKnight
Water Security and Emergency Response Coordinator
Office of Drinking Water
gregory.mcknight@doh.wa.gov
(360) 236-3159

Training and Education Calendar: September - December 2009

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topics</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Phone #</u>	<u>Cost/CEU</u>
Sept. 8	Reviewing the WAC	Liberty Lake	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Sept. 8-10	Backflow Assembly Tester Refresher	Auburn	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$350/2.1
Sept. 8-10	Water Distribution Manager Certification Exam Review	Auburn	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$305/2.1
Sept. 9-11	Cross Connection Specialist Exam Review	Olympia	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$225/\$275/2.1
Sept. 9-11	Pumps and Pumping in Water and Wastewater Facilities	Lacey	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$325/2.1
Sept. 9-11	Water Distribution Manager Exam Review	Liberty Lake	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$225/\$275/2.2
Sept. 10	BTO/WIPO OIT and Level 1 Cert Exam Review	Everett	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$120/0.7
Sept. 14-16	Backflow Assembly Tester Refresher	Auburn	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$350/2.1
Sept. 15	BAT 1 day Professional Exam Review	Liberty Lake	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Sept. 15-17	Backflow Assembly Tester Refresher	Spokane Valley	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$350/2.1
Sept. 15-17	Cross-Connection Control Basics and Exam Review	Lacey	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$295/2.1
Sept. 15-17	Water Distribution Manager Exam Review	Olympia	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$225/\$275/2.2
Sept. 15-17	Water & Wastewater Disinfection	Leavenworth	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$315/2.1
Sept. 17	BAT 1 day Professional Exam Review	Shelton	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Sept. 17-18	Backflow Assembly Tester Lab	Auburn	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$235/NA
Sept. 18	BTO/WIPO OIT and Level 1 Cert Exam Review	Leavenworth	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$120/0.7
Sept. 18	Incident Command System & NIMS Training	Lacey	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$140/0.8
Sept. 18	Reviewing the WAC	Olympia	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Sept. 18	Water Quality Complaints: Response, Investig & Recovery	Lacey	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$140/0.8
Sept. 21	Advanced Math for WTPO	Olympia	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$60/\$85/0.4
Sept. 21-23	Backflow Assembly Tester Refresher	Auburn	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$350/2.1
Sept. 22	Cross-Connection Specialist Exam Review	Liberty Lake	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Sept. 22-24	Water Distribution Manager Certification Exam Review	Lacey	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$305/2.1
Sept. 22-24	Water Treatment Plant Operator Exam Review	Olympia	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$225/\$275/2.1
Sept. 23-24	Competent Person for Cave-In Protection	Richland	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$249/1.4
Sept. 23-25	Electricity Basics for Water & Wastewater Personnel	Everett	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$305/2.1
Sept. 24-25	Backflow Assembly Tester Lab	Auburn	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$235/NA
Sept. 25	Confined Space Entry Training	Liberty Lake	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Sept. 25	Confined Space Entry	Richland	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$149/0.7
Sept. 28	Hach Water & Wastewater Analysis	Bremerton	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$90/\$115/0.6
Sept. 28	WDS/WDM 1 Day Exam Review	Moses Lake	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Sept. 28-30	Backflow Assembly Tester Refresher	Auburn	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$350/2.1
Sept. 29	Advanced Control Valves	Vancouver	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$85/0.7
Sept. 29	Advanced Math for WTPO	Moses Lake	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$60/\$85/0.4
Sept. 30	BTO/WIPO OIT and Level 1 Cert Exam Review	Lacey	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$120/0.7
Sept. 30	Hach Water & Wastewater Analysis	Issaquah	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Sept. 30	Reviewing the WAC	Moses Lake	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$90/\$115/0.6
Oct. 1	Water Distribution Specialist 1 day Exam Review	Kennewick	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Oct. 1-2	Advanced CCC: Risk Assessment & Hazard Analysis	Auburn	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$195/1.4
Oct. 2	Hach Water & Wastewater Analysis	Vancouver	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$90/\$115/0.6
Oct. 2	Incident Command System & NIMS Training	Auburn	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$140/0.8
Oct. 5	Interpreting Utility Maps and Drawings	Bremerton	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.5
Oct. 7-9	Pumps & Pumping in Water and Wastewater Facilities	Spokane Valley	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$325/2.1
Oct. 8	Confined Space Entry Training	Mt. Vernon	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Oct. 13	BAT 1 day Professional Growth Exam Review	Shelton	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Oct. 14	Cross-Connection Control and Backflow Basics	Shelton	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Oct. 14-16	Electricity Basics for Water & Wastewater Personnel	Auburn	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$305/2.1
Oct. 15-16	Water/Wastewater Disinfection	Liberty Lake	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$180/\$205/1.2
Oct. 16	Basic Electrical	Issaquah	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Oct. 19	From Water Loss to Revenue	Bellingham	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Oct. 20	Are you ready? Being prepared for your Sanitary Survey	Everett	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$169/0.7
Oct. 20	Basic Control Valves	Moses Lake	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Oct. 20	Managing & Owning a Public Water System	Kennewick	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Oct. 21	Asbestos/Cement Pipe Works Practice Procedures	Mt. Vernon	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$160/0.7

Training and Education Calendar: September - December 2009

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topics</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Phone #</u>	<u>Cost/CEU</u>
Oct. 21-23	Water & Wastewater Disinfection	Everett	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$315/2.1
Oct. 22	Competent Person Cave-In Protection	Mt. Vernon	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Oct. 22	Refreshing your Emergency Response Plan	Olympia	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Oct. 26-27	Fire Hydrants: Installation, Testing, Operation & Repair	Longview	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$255/1.4
Oct. 26-30	Entry Level Water System Basics	Shelton	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	TBA
Nov. 3	Basic Operations and Maintenance of Pumps	Vancouver	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$60/\$85/0.4
Nov. 4	Interpreting Utility Maps and Drawings	Pt. Angeles	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/
Nov. 4-5	Advanced CCC: Risk Assessment & Hazard Analysis	Mt. Vernon	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$195/1.4
Nov. 4-5	CEU Roundup	Shelton	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$210/\$235/1.4
Nov. 4-5	Process Control & Instrumentation	Richland	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$255/1.4
Nov. 4-6	Pumps and Pumping in Water and Wastewater Facilities	Auburn	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$325/2.1
Nov. 5-6	Adv Backflow Assemb Testing, Troubleshooting & Repair	Auburn	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$295/1.4
Nov. 6	Basic Operations and Maintenance of Pumps	Mt. Vernon	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$60/\$85/0.4
Nov. 6	Confined Space Entry	Auburn	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$149/0.7
Nov. 9-10	BAT 2 Day Professional Growth Exam Review	Shelton	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$210/\$235/1.4
Nov. 13	Asbestos Cement Pipe Handling & Respiratory App	Moses Lake	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$75/\$100/0.5
Nov. 13	Asbestos Cement Pipe Work Practice Procedures	Auburn	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$160/0.7
Nov. 16	From Water Loss to Revenue	Colville	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130
Nov. 17	Water Audits & Rates	Mt. Vernon	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$90/\$105/0.6
Nov. 17	Water Use Efficiency Rule Review	Longview	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Nov. 18	Water Distribution Useful tools and practices	Shelton	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$1300.7
Nov. 18-19	CEU Roundup	Liberty Lake	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$210/\$213/1.4
Nov. 19-20	Fire Hydrants: Installation, Testing, Operation & Repair	Mt. Vernon	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$255/1.4
Nov. 19-20	Competent Person for Cave-In Protection	Auburn	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$249/1.4
Dec. 1	BAT 1 Day Professional Growth Exam Review	Shelton	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Dec. 1	WDS/WDM 1 Day Exam Review	Olympia	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Dec. 2	Managing and Owning Public Water System	Longview	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Dec. 2-4	Water & Wastewater Disinfection	Lacey	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$315/2.1
Dec. 2-4	Water Works Basics	Auburn	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$295/2.1
Dec. 3	BAT 1 Day Professional Growth Exam Review	Kennewick	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Dec. 3	Refreshing your Emergency Response Plan	Kenmore	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Dec. 4	Confined Space Training	Yakima	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Dec. 8	Water Distribution Specialist 1 Day Exam Review	Ellensburg	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Dec. 8-10	Pumps and Pumping in Water and Wastewater Facilities	Everett	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$325/2.1
Dec. 8-11	Backflow Assembly Tester Certification Exam Prep	Shelton	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$420/\$4452.8
Dec. 9-10	CEU Roundup	Ellensburg	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$210/\$235/1.4
Dec. 9-11	Water Works Basics	Yakima	WETRC	1-800-562-0858	\$295/2.1
Dec. 15	Basic Water Chemistry	Lacey	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7
Dec. 15	Refreshing your Emergency Response Plan	Vancouver	ERWOW	1-800-272-5981	\$105/\$130/0.7

Our training calendar is updated quarterly; please visit the additional training links for current information.

For information about distance learning activities, call Certification Services, Green River Community College at (877) 780-2444.

Additional Training Links:

AWWA King County Subsection Web site <<http://www.kcawwa.org/>>

ERWOW Web site <<http://www.erwow.org/>>

WETRC Web site <<http://www.wetrc.org/>>

AWWA Pacific Northwest Section Web site <<http://www.pnws-awwa.org/>>

EPA Electronic Workshops Web site <<http://www.epa.gov/safewater/dwa/electronic.html>> (No CEU assigned to these courses.)

Partnership for Water Conservation <<http://www.partners4water.org/>>

For the complete Training Calendar, visit the Drinking Water Homepage and click on Training - <<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw>>

NOTE: Links to external resources are provided as a public service and do not imply endorsement by the Washington State Department of Health.

Moved recently? Changed employers? Don't lose your waterworks certification.

Drinking water rules require operators to report changes of home address, home phone number and employer information—in writing—to the Waterworks Operator Certification Program.

Every year operators are assessed a late fee or **lose their certification** because they fail to report address changes. The Waterworks Certification Guideline says:

“Failure to notify the Waterworks Operator Certification Program **in writing** of a change of address does not constitute a reasonable excuse for failure to renew a certificate prior to assessment of the renewal late fee. **DOH will not consider appeals from operators assessed the late fee or who failed to renew due to an unreported address change.**”

There are several ways to update your information. Be sure to include your operator certification number on all correspondence.

Write us:

Waterworks Operator Certification Program
PO Box 47822
Olympia WA 98504-7822

Use the online form:

www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/operatorcertification/op_form.htm
E-mail: larry.granish@doh.wa.gov
Fax: Larry Granish at (360) 236-2252

If you have questions, call Larry Granish at (360) 236-3141 or (800) 525-2536, extension 1.

2009 Backflow Assembly Tester Exam Schedule

BAT Certification Examinations			BAT Professional Growth Examinations			
Auburn	Spokane	Vancouver	Auburn	Spokane	Vancouver	
Sept. 21 Oct. 19	Oct. 19	Oct. 15	Sept. 11 Sept. 18 Sept. 26 Oct. 2 Oct. 16	Sept. 14 Sept. 25 Sept. 28 Oct. 8 Oct. 17	Sept. 18 Sept. 26 Sept. 28 Oct. 16 Oct. 17	Sept. 17 Oct. 16

Washington Certification Services may add dates and locations based on demand. For the most up-to-date exam schedule, and information about applying for an exam, visit <http://www.wacertservices.org>

Workshop for engineers and system managers

This fall, various subsections of the Pacific Northwest Section – American Water Works Association will sponsor a workshop on estimating water system demands and physical service capacity at six locations. They plan to mail a flyer to their members.

The workshop is targeted to consulting engineers and water system managers. **It is good for 0.6 continuing education units.** Dates and locations are:

Oct. 15 Woodland City Council Chambers (Lower Columbia Subsection)

Oct. 22 Tacoma Public Utilities Building (South Sound Subsection)

Oct. 28 Benton County Public Utility District, Kennewick (Central Washington Subsection)

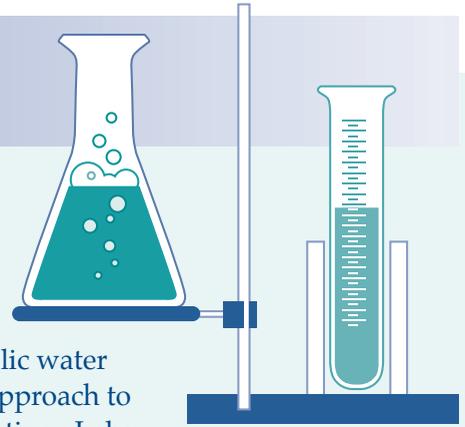
Oct. 29 Modern Electric, Spokane Valley (Inland Empire Subsection)

Nov. 10 Cotton Tree Inn, Mount Vernon (Northwest Washington Subsection)

Nov. 12 Bellevue Services Center (King County Subsection)

For more information, visit the subsection online at <http://www.PNWS-awwa.org> or call Jim Hudson at (360) 236-3131.

LAB CORNER



Groundwater Rule

The Office of Drinking Water is working to adopt a new rule to meet the federal Groundwater Rule requirements. This rule will increase public health protection against microbial pathogens in public water systems that use groundwater. The rule establishes a risk-targeted approach to identify groundwater systems that are susceptible to fecal contamination. Labs may see a slight increase in microbial monitoring as a result of this rule. We will keep you updated as we work on draft rule language.

For further information on the timeline for this rule, visit us online at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ruletimelines/dwGroundwater.doc>

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Laboratory Data Reporting Rule

We held workshops in Olympia on June 10 and in Moses Lake on June 11 to get laboratory suggestions on draft language in the Laboratory Reporting Rule. We highlighted state reporting levels and mandatory electronic data reporting, which are two major changes from the original draft version. All of the comments were recorded. We are now considering those comments for revisions before proceeding with the rule.

For further information on the timeline for this rule, visit us online at http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/our_main_pages/regula.htm

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Lab Slip Tip

“Bad Original Lab Slips Make Bad Copies”

Please make a **legible** copy of your lab slip before you scan or fax it to the Office of Drinking Water. Use a **black and white copier** to produce a copy from the original with high contrast. You can send that copy with much better results.

- Some of the lab copies that purveyors get may be golden or green. **Colored papers do not fax or scan well.** The shaded areas come out even darker and the information written in these areas cannot be deciphered.
- Purveyors also sometimes get lab copies that are **carbon copies or written in pencil.** When these are faxed or scanned, it is like using disappearing ink—some of the critical areas on the lab slip appear to be blank or cannot be read.

Contaminant of the Quarter: Nitrate

A note from the editor: More and more people are becoming aware and concerned about the quality of their drinking water. This is not surprising because we continue to see headlines about drinking water being contaminated. To satisfy this growing awareness, we are starting a series of articles, highlighting a contaminant each quarter.

Nitrate is one of the most common contaminants associated with drinking water. Nitrate is a chemical found in most fertilizers, manure, and liquid waste discharged from septic tanks. Rain or irrigation water can carry nitrate down through the soil into groundwater. Your drinking water may contain nitrate if your well draws from this groundwater.

Nitrate is an acute contaminant. That means a single exposure can affect a person's health if the concentration exceeds the maximum contaminant level (MCL) of 10 micrograms per liter.

Nitrate reduces the ability of red blood cells to carry oxygen. In most adults and children these red blood cells rapidly return to normal. However, in infants it can take much longer for the blood cells to return to normal. Infants who drink water with high levels of nitrate (or eat foods made with nitrate-contaminated water) may develop a serious health condition due to the lack of oxygen. This condition is called methemoglobinemia or "blue baby syndrome."

Vulnerable populations

Nitrate in the concentrations typically found in Washington water supplies is colorless, odorless, and tasteless. Short-term exposure to nitrate can be a serious risk for:

- Infants.
- Pregnant and nursing women.
- Individuals with compromised immune systems.

Monitoring for nitrate

Because nitrate is commonly used and easily absorbed into water, all public water systems must sample regularly. Group A systems test at least once a year and Group B systems test at least every three years.

We recommend that all private well owners sample regularly, too.

Natural nitrate levels in the state are very low, but a number of Washington water systems and private wells have water sources with nitrate in excess of the MCL.

Systems can reduce nitrate levels in drinking water. Here's how:

- Mix the water with non-contaminated sources.
- Develop a new source.
- Use alternative water supplies for vulnerable populations.
- Treatment, such as reverse osmosis. Unlike microbial contamination, boiling does not help. It makes it worse!

Common potential sources of contamination

- Manure in all of its forms (from two-legged and four-legged sources).
- Processed waste: septic, drain field, and sewage outfall.
- Fertilizer.

While most serious nitrate contamination issues are associated with poorly managed agriculture and vulnerable groundwater, we are all part of this problem. We can all help to reduce our water supply risk.

- Don't over use fertilizers at home.
- Maintain septic and sewer systems.
- Improve and maintain safe wells and water sources.
- Work with communities to develop good source water protection strategies and best agricultural management practices that reduce and control nutrient waste.
- Monitor regularly.

For more information

Visit ODW's nitrate Web page at <<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/Programs/nitrate.htm>>

U.S. Geological Survey published, *Distribution of Elevated Nitrate Concentrations in Ground Water in Washington State*. It is online at <<http://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2008/3063/>>

WETRC Training Plans to Expand to Entry Level Training

By Leslie Moore, Executive Director of WETRC



Leslie Moore

Washington Environmental Training Center (WETRC), located at Green River Community College in Auburn, is expanding to include entry-level classes for water and wastewater operators in Washington state. To support the industry as operators retire, WETRC will begin offering online entry-level

classes in winter quarter.

WETRC was moving toward entry-level courses, but is now actively pursuing that direction because the college suspended the Water/Wastewater degree program. Drastic state budget cuts, which have hit all higher education institutions, forced Green River to suspend the two-year degree program.

The Water/Wastewater program was a target because of low graduation rates. While specific Water/

Wastewater classes remained popular, students were leaving the program before completing their degree to enter the workforce. In the last 10 years, only 25 students completed their degree out of 758 students who took Water/Wastewater courses.

WETRC is poised to step in and expand its mission of training current operators to include entry-level courses. The entry-level water courses implemented on-line will be:

- Water Treatment 1
- Water Distribution

Each course is 30 hours (three college credits). WETRC intends to provide online training for operators of large and small water systems around the state. The training will help prepare operators for the water distribution manager 1 and water treatment plant operator 1 exams.

WETRC continues to offer courses for water and wastewater operators who need to meet their professional growth requirement. Currently, we are planning the "Wrap Up" program at the college's new Kent campus at Kent Station in mid-December. The "Wrap Up" may be your last chance to earn continuing education units and meet your professional growth requirement for renewal. The "Wrap-Up" will include six three-hour classes over a three-day period.

For more information, visit WETRC online at <http://www.greenriver.edu/WETRC/>

Media Communication... (Continued from Page 4)

it'll give you an idea of what they want. Then prepare a short list of messages that are simple and clear. Keep your answers short, and stick to your point. If possible, offer to show them something visual (equipment or work that's under way). On-camera technique is an acquired skill, but here are some hints. Look at the reporter or the photographer...whoever is asking the questions. Avoid looking back and forth at more than one person, and don't look directly into the lens. Stand or sit still; try not to rock or swivel or pivot. Relax. Be yourself. If you stumble on an answer, ask if you can start over (don't do this if the interview is "live," which will be rare for most of you). And be ready with your strongest "take home" message for that final question,

"Did I leave anything out or is there anything you'd like to add?" That's a free pass for your strongest message, and it's most effective to relate that message to people by saying something about protecting your customers. After all, that's what this is all about.

For more tips on how to work with the media, call (360) 236-3162 or e-mail carolyn.cox@doh.wa.gov

What's going on with Group B water systems?

This year, the Legislature eliminated funding for oversight of Group B water systems in the 2009-2011 budget. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency continues to provide funding for us to oversee Group A water systems. However, we cannot use that money for our Group B program.

The Legislature also changed the law to allow the State Board of Health (Board) to adopt rules for Group B water systems that do not require ongoing water quality monitoring. The Board also received authority to exempt water systems with fewer than five residential connections from all requirements.

What does this mean?

The Board asked us to get public input before we propose rule language. We will meet with stakeholder groups and interested parties this fall and winter. Afterwards, the Board will take formal public comment before it adopts any rule changes.

What's a Group B water system?

Group B water systems serve fewer than 15 connections and fewer than 25 people per day. The state's 13,000 Group B water systems serve about 110,000 people. That's 2 percent of our population.

In contrast to Group A water systems, local health agencies play a large role in overseeing Group B water systems. Although the Group B rule applies everywhere in Washington, each county operates a bit differently.

The funding cuts and the changes to the rule will affect local health agencies. As a result, local health agencies told us the Group B rule must remain flexible to meet each county's unique situation and need. We will continue to be mindful of the effects any changes may have on our partners.

How can I be involved?

We will use a ListServ (special e-mail list) to send information. If you are interested, go to our Web site <<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw>>, click on "Group B Water System Information" ListServ at the bottom of the page, and subscribe. If you work with Group B systems, please share this information with them.

Have you signed up for the Rulemaking Listserv?

Yes, I have.

Great! You will receive our rulemaking notices by e-mail.

No? Oops.

What happens if I don't sign up?

You won't receive rulemaking notices in the mail or by e-mail.

If you choose NOT to sign up, it is still your responsibility to comply with new rules as well as existing rules.

How can I sign up?

You can join the Rulemaking Listserv by visiting our Web site at <<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw>>, click on "Drinking Water Rules" Listserv at the bottom of the page to sign up.

How can I get up-to-date rulemaking information?

Go to our Rules and Laws Web page for current information.

Call Theresa Phillips, lead rules coordinator, at (360) 236-3147, or Michelle Austin, policy coordinator, at (360) 236-3156.

Minor Correction to Stage 2 Disinfectants and Disinfection Byproducts Rule

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently made a minor correction to the Stage 2 Rule in 40 CFR 141.605 and 40 CFR 141.621. Groundwater systems serving 500 to 9,999 people will be required to monitor annually for **both** total trihalomethanes (TTHM) and haloacetic acids (HAA5) at two locations, instead of monitoring for **either** TTHM or HAA5 at two locations. EPA published this correction on June 29, 2009. It will incorporate this change into the final rule language that goes into effect January 4, 2010.

If you have any questions about this change, call Ethan Moseng at (253) 395-6770.

▪ New & Revised Publications

Measuring Water Levels in Wells (331-428) – New! Three-page illustrated publication explains how to measure the water level in your well. Identifies common well-production issues and explains how your measurements can help you identify and diagnose them before they cause serious problems.

Pressure Relief Valves on Pressure Tanks (331-429) – New! One-page illustrated tech tip explains how pressure relief valves protect pressure tanks, design requirements, and how to ensure pressure relief valves are approved and properly installed.

Municipal Water Law: Duty to Provide Service Requirement (331-366) – Revised. Two-page fact sheet explains when municipal water suppliers have a duty to provide service to all new connections within their retail service area.

Municipal Water Law: Approval Requirement for Water System Plans (331-368) – Revised. One-page fact sheet explains requirements water systems must meet before the Office of Drinking Water will review their water system plans.

Relevancy of Training for Certified Waterworks Operators (331-186) – Revised. Two-page fact sheet defines “relevant training” waterworks operators can use to meet their professional growth requirement.

Backflow prevention assemblies approved for installation in Washington state (2009) (331-137) – Revised. This CD identifies the makes and models of DOH-approved backflow assemblies. It is based on the Approved Backflow Assemblies List published by the University of Southern California (USC) Foundation for Cross-Connection Control and Hydraulic Research. USC permits us to supply only one CD per person or organization.

For copies of Office of Drinking Water publications, visit the Web site at <<https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/eh/dw/publications/publications.cfm>> or call (800) 521-0323.

Use our Listserv to get e-mail copies of new and revised publications. Sign up at <<http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=wa-drinkingwaterpub&A=1>>



Operator legislation... (Continued from Page 1)

This bill:

- Clarifies our authority to immediately suspend or revoke a water system operator's certification for intentionally violating drinking water rules anywhere in the system (source, treatment, distribution, and cross-connection control facilities located beyond the distribution system).
- Clarifies our authority to certify backflow assembly testers and cross-connection control specialists.
- References the relationship between our backflow assembly tester certification and the Department of Labor and Industries' specialty plumber licensing requirements.
- Makes the definition of Group A water system consistent with the definition of public water system in federal law.

For more information, please call the Office of Drinking Water at (800) 525-2536, Ext. 3.

Contamination... (Continued from Page 6)

department delivered the letters to the neighbors and helped them understand the public health aspects of this information.

This incident shows why coordination among multiple agencies is necessary during emergency response activities. This cooperation proved especially important when dealing with the sensitive issue of sharing information.

Most drinking water emergencies require releasing information to the public and the media as a function of protecting public health. Adding the complexity of law enforcement involvement means responders must make an extra effort to coordinate activities, educate, and learn how different agencies view the challenge of keeping people safe.

Emergency response and security resources are online at <<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/Security/security.htm>>

Department of Health
Office of Drinking Water
PO Box 47822
Olympia, WA 98504-7822
(800) 521-0323

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OF PRINTING 98501



Operators—Do We Have Your E-mail Address?

To improve communications and reduce taxpayer costs, we are requesting your e-mail address. Please e-mail it to

Larry Granish at
larry.granish@doh.wa.gov

Don't forget to include your operator certification number in your e-mail.

Visit the Office of Drinking Water online at
<<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/default.htm>>



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Eastern Regional Office has Moved!

Drinking Water's Eastern Regional Office has completed the move to its new location in Spokane Valley. The office is in the River View Corporate Center located just off the Sullivan Road Exit on I-90. The mailing address is:

Department of Health
Office of Drinking Water
16201 E. Indiana Ave., Suite 1500
Spokane Valley, WA 99216

The main telephone and fax numbers are:
Phone (509) 329-2100 • Fax (509) 329-2104

New phone numbers for staff and a map with driving directions are available online at: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/Staff_Lists/eastern_ro.htm> Calls to old phone numbers will be forwarded to the new ones for the next three months.



In addition to the Office of Drinking Water, the River View Corporate Center houses staff from other Environmental Health programs and the Health Systems Quality Assurance Division.

In This Issue

The following people contributed to the production of this issue of *Water Tap*:

Michelle Austin, Peggy Barton, Dave Christensen, Carolyn Cox, Mike Dexel, Larry Granish, Jim Harksen, Jennifer Kropack, Mike Means, Leslie Moore, Ethan Moseng, Donn Moyer, Judy Passey, Dick Pedlar, Theresa Phillips, Ingrid Salmon, Rich Sarver, Ginny Stern, Amy Swecker, Linda Waring, Kitty Weisman and Mike Wilson.

The Department of Health Office of Drinking Water publishes *Water Tap* quarterly to provide information to water system owners, water works operators and others interested in drinking water.

Mary Selecky, Secretary of Health

Gregg Grunenfelder, Assistant Secretary of Health
Environmental Health Division

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Comments, questions, story ideas, articles and photographs submitted for publication are welcome. Please address correspondence to Linda Waring, *Water Tap*, Office of Drinking Water, P.O. Box 47822, Olympia, WA 98504-7822, or e-mail linda.waring@doh.wa.gov. Past issues are available by contacting the editor or visiting the Web site at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/our_main_pages/watertap.htm>