

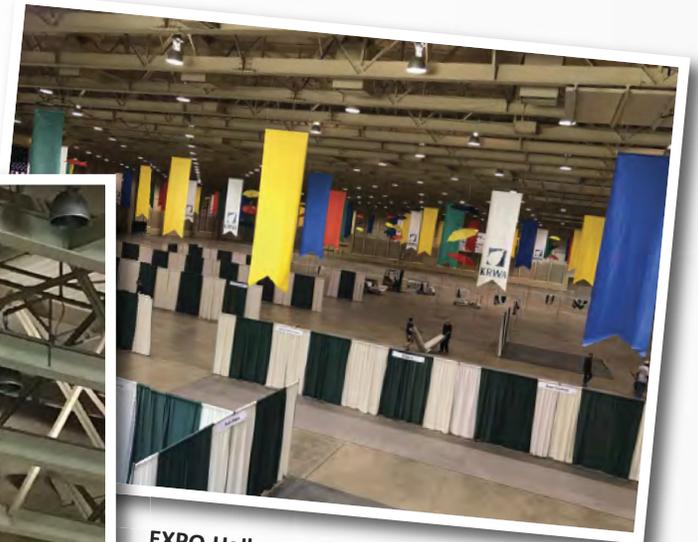
# When It's Time for the Annual Conference to Begin, Someone Just Punches "Play" and Everything Swings Into Smooth Motion (yea, sure!)

**C**ities and water districts in Kansas have a real benefit. Where else can people go to learn about water and wastewater utility operations and management, see products and services, meet with agencies and make many new friends? It's the annual conference and exhibition sponsored by Kansas Rural Water Association.

I wanted to take this opportunity to recap highlights of what amounts to a plethora of details – things that many people cannot even imagine – like which stagehand is going to be at the elevator to help move the carnival trailers in, or what time is the outside banner to be hung to the number of place settings for every meal and the route through buffet lines. In a nutshell, the KRWA conference strives to have something going all the time for anyone and everyone – and it's all



**"Weathering All Storms" incorporated umbrellas with banners in EXPO Hall.**



**EXPO Hall covers 93,000 square feet which is fully carpeted for the conference. This photo shows early stages of setup.**

programmed to happen on a schedule down to the number of tables, electrical services and meal counts that have to be guaranteed well in advance of any food preparation.

This year I volunteered to help prepare the theme decorations "Weathering all Storms". I arrived on the Saturday prior to the conference. I watched and guided stagehands who have to be contracted to hang the many umbrellas and banners in EXPO Hall. The 260 umbrellas were loaned to KRWA by the city of Atchison and the banners were one of Elmer's ideas from first use of EXPO Hall by KRWA.

But the real preparations go on nearly year round. As soon as the conference is over, Assistant General Manager Greg Duryea has already prepared a "thank you!" to exhibitors; booth reservation forms are available and typically within a month after one conference, more than half the spaces are already reserved for the next year.

By sometime in August or early September, arrangements are made with a keynote speaker or other special invitation. In late September, several staff meet at the KRWA office to develop the training session topics. There are 58 different sessions. Staff work together to contact various presenters.



**Large units such as this trailer filled with electronic equipment are moved in before carpet goes down.**

Developing the synopsis is a challenge and Elmer puts a lot of effort into that. If you take a look at a program booklet, you will see that there's horizontal alignments and equal lengths to the synopses of the sessions.

So from the time the program goes to print and registrations begin coming in, the Christmas lights have been located to add to the decor of Convention Hall, staff agree to various prizes that cost more than \$10,000 for the opening night meet and greet and WaterPAC prizes.

Elmer and Greg are busy working with the Hyatt and Caterers and making major decisions about training rooms and meals. Laurie processes payments as registrations flow in.

In mid-March, KRWA staff embark on the office to prepare the portfolios. Purchased directly from a manufacturer in China, those come in by cargo ship to Los Angeles or Oakland, then take a ride by train to Kansas City, where Lonnie Boller picks up several pallets of portfolios. Twenty-four hundred portfolios weigh nearly two tons. Help is needed to fill them with pens, writing pads, the program and exhibit brochure.

The week before conference the phones ring and emails come at a furious rate. Several staff members spend two days organizing name badges and meal tickets. Tedious is an understatement to describe this process – but isn't it nice to have names printed on meal tickets and everyone's registrations in alpha order? On the Friday prior to the week of the conference, two tandem axle trailers are filled – with portfolios, prizes, lights, banners, computers – everything plus more it seems.

As I walked into Expo Hall on the Saturday morning prior to the conference, it was a very large and empty



**KRWA staff help move exhibitors into EXPO Hall. Jon Steele is carting equipment to a booth.**

space – 93,000 sq. feet, void of anything other than beige colored walls and steel rafters. But it would soon start to come alive with banners and umbrellas, the 365 booth spaces, rolls and rolls of carpet, hundreds of tables and thousands of feet of pipe and drape erected by Henry Helgerson Company, the exhibit booth provider.

Century II staff spent Monday morning hanging the umbrellas in Exhibition Hall where meals are served. Backdrops from Kansas City and Wichita are raised on the three stages. AV equipment is moved in by Ed Hope with Audio-Visual Services; KRWA staff do their part to move exhibitors into the hall and make things go as smooth as possible.

It takes many people. KRWA has enjoyed a great group of people in Wichita. For example, Deborah

Wierenga, owner of Balloon Studio, works with KRWA staff two months or so prior to the event to help create interesting decorations. This year, giant balloon clouds were above the umbrellas .. and there are always many wild and sometimes a bit crazy, beautiful balloon creations on buffet tables and around the convention center. Linda Windler from Thoroughbred Systems helps brainstorm for ideas to help make the opening sessions unique. I mean, where else have you seen three people assembling a 6-inch pipe with restrained fittings on the stage prior to the opening? The Butler Headliners, Kathy Hauptman and the casts from The Forum Theatre, the King Midas & Mufflers Band, bartenders, caricaturists, Ottaway Amusements, special guests and more – all contribute immensely to what becomes a big “family reunion” of sorts – the annual KRWA conference.

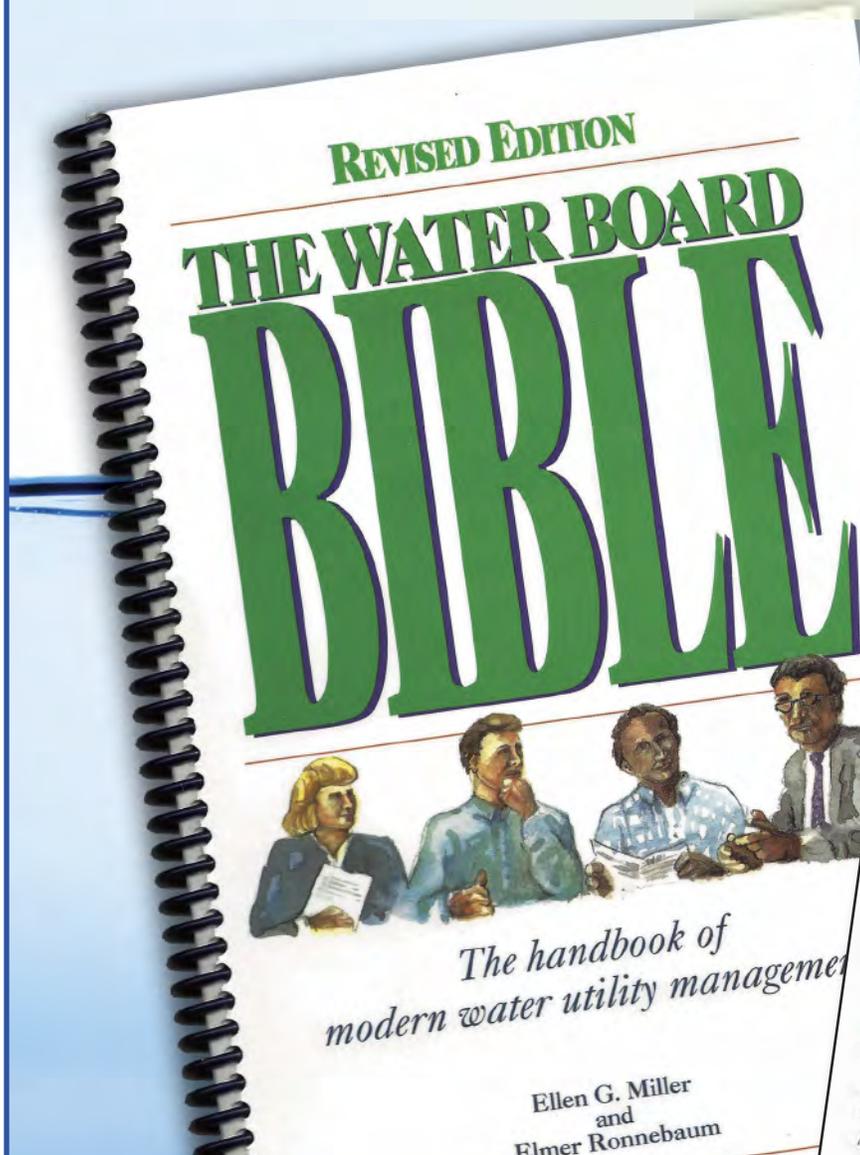
Be assured, KRWA will be ready again in 2019 for what will again be the largest (and best) water and wastewater conference in Mid-America. It's a unique experience and it's a true fun time. It's not too early to mark your calendars for 2019.



**Getting all 365 exhibits in place is an accomplishment.**

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# A newly updated *Water Board Bible* is now available from Kansas Rural Water Association



Building on the strong foundation document authored in 1993 by Ellen Miller and Elmer Ronnebaum, the "Bible", was reprinted in 1995 and again in 2010 with minor revisions.

A much more extensive review and updates in the 2016 printing were provided by Gary Hanson, Stumbo Hanson, LLP (ret.).



THE WATER BOARD BIBLE

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KRWA also continues to make its handbooks available to other state and national organizations. More than 42,000 copies have been provided.

To obtain copies, contact KRWA, 785.336.3760.

*"The Water Board Bible strikes the right tone with respect to current trends including diversity in the workforce, open government and post-Flint regulatory climate as well as the relationship with the consuming public and their water supply expectations,"*  
— Gary Hanson

Funding for the 2016 printing is courtesy of the Kansas Rural Water Finance Authority. The Authority has offered to donate copies to every rural water district in Kansas, upon such request. The handbook will also be used for board training provided by KRWA.