

Annual Conference Review



Nearly 2,200 attend... 2009 KRWA Conference

Nearly 2,200 people flocked to Wichita, KS on March 24 - 26 for the 42nd Annual Conference & Exhibition sponsored by the Kansas Rural Water Association. Conferences take a tremendous amount of time to plan and conduct. The weather was warm, with the pear trees and flowering crabs in full bloom. But the 2009 conference was one that ended not a day too soon because on Friday, March 27, Wichita and south-central Kansas were blasted by up to 14 inches of snow. Guests at the Hyatt Regency for the next big event in Wichita, a state wrestling competition, found travel impossible.

Again, the 2009 KRWA conference was ranked by many as the best ever. That's because the conference kept to its central purpose: to provide an outstanding technical program, hold a large exhibition and be "the" annual learning event for water and wastewater systems. The KRWA conference is not a state association show – it's the people's conference – and it is only possible because of the willingness of presenters, the exhibitors who filled 278 booth spaces – and the strong desire of KRWA's board and staff to see that the best conference possible is available to registrants. It's mid-America's largest and has been held at Wichita's Century II Convention Center since 1992. Conference goes held rooms at 14 different Wichita hotels, purchasing nearly 800 rooms in all.

Representatives of 295 cities and 189 rural water districts attended. Overall, 29 states were represented by registrants. Those attending included 961 water and wastewater operators, 826 industry members, 187 board and council members, 120 administrators, city managers or RWD office personnel and 64 agency personnel. A big show takes cash too. The total conference registration fees and meals totaled \$231,660; exhibitors and sponsors contributed another \$86,263.

KRWA appreciates the interest of municipal water systems from Oklahoma, Missouri and Nebraska that attended.

During the annual business meeting, one delegate asked, "How much does that Carnival Party cost; that seems like an expensive deal to me." KRWA General Manager Elmer Ronnebaum replied that the Carnival Party did not cost anyone of the early registrants a single penny – thanks to the subsidy that exhibitors contribute to the overall conference as well as Carnival Party and conference sponsors. The fact is that the KRWA conference treats registrants mighty fine – and that is largely due to the tremendous support by vendors who purchase exhibit space. That revenue subsidizes the registration fees, the meals, the Carnival Party, and more – keeping the price for the KRWA conference way below market prices. There is no other conference that offers as much for such a low price. KRWA's philosophy is to make the conference as affordable as possible so that more people benefit. As testimony to the support? The Hyatt had all rooms reserved already by Friday morning for the 2010 conference.



There were 188 delegates registered for the Annual Meeting of Membership.



Exhibitors like the KRWA conference!

All of the exhibitors' heavy equipment, tools, computers, brochures, give-away items, banners and displays were ushered into EXPO Hall beginning Monday morning, March 23. After the big equipment was in, workers from the Helgerson Company unrolled the carpet for the aisles. EXPO Hall is 93,000 square feet – and KRWA provides carpet for the entire display area. What is especially unique about the KRWA conference is that when an exhibitor pulls up to the curb or backs into EXPO Hall to unload the company booth materials, KRWA is there to meet the company with one or more carts. This is welcomed assistance that sets the KRWA conference apart from most shows.

- Learning More About Distribution Systems
- KanCap – Improving Management of Kansas Water Systems
- Dealing with Difficult Customers; Improving Presentations



The KRWA registration gals – Teresa Steele, Laurie Strathman, Rita Clary and Kathleen Ronnebaum.

Successful Management, from Assets to Rates

With so many tools to help water systems, why still so much confusion and debate on rate structuring? This session taught where to begin and contained thorough discussion of “Rate Checkup, an excel-based worksheet, asset management and a demonstration of the “Financial Dashboard.” Systems learned how adequately funded systems are successful. Robert Dunlevy, US EPA, Meghan Hemenway of the Environmental Finance Center in Region

7 EPA and John Haas, Ranson Financial Consultants, LLC explained that systems need to employ good management practices so the utilities are left in a better condition for the next generation.

Pre-conference sessions draw 812 attendees

The 2009 Conference featured ten daylong preconference sessions on Tuesday, March 24 as well as the ninth annual Attorneys' Forum. The preconference sessions allow for a thorough presentation and discussion of topics that are of importance and interest to water and wastewater systems. The sessions in 2009 and summaries follow:

- Successful Management from Assets to Rates
- Water Treatment Processes – Achieving Regulatory Compliance
- Computer Corner: Using Technology Effectively and Efficiently
- Resolving Disputes in a Neighborly Way
- Content Management Systems for Web Sites
- How to Troubleshoot Wastewater Lagoon Systems
- Making Friends With Locators – From Pipelines to Leaks

Water Treatment Processes – Achieving Regulatory Compliance

Pat McCool, KRWA Consultant, teamed up with former KDHE District Engineer Rex Heape, now with Shafer, Kline & Warren, Inc. to provide the 132 attendees with the basics to better understand water treatment processes. The chemistry, theory, and practical aspects of each process were discussed. The presentations also addressed how good treatment processes help achieve the regulatory requirements of CT compliance and disinfection byproducts. The advantages and disadvantages of chlorination, chlorine dioxide additions and ozonation were compared. Granular activated carbon filter media, monitoring turbidity removal

and the advantages of different types of coagulants were reviewed. While the session was geared towards processes used at many Kansas water treatment plants, presenters made the training relevant as they presented examples of the advantages of certain process at various locations.

Computer Corner: Using Technology Effectively and Efficiently

Patterned after the 'Computer Corner' feature in the KRWA Lifeline magazine, this computer "Dear Abby" for clerks, board members, and managers, Linda and Merle Windler of Thoroughbred Systems covered a wide range of information on office automation. The use of computers in municipal government and rural water districts requires making decisions about what hardware will be needed and what steps should be taken to maintain equipment health. The other side to that coin is having appropriate software compatible with the operating system in use. There was extensive discussion on the subject of Windows XP vs. Vista – and demonstration and discussion of the upcoming revamp of Vista – the new Windows 7 scheduled for release the end of summer 2009. Information was provided on helpful application software available free by download for virus protection and the Open Office suite by Sun Microsystems for word processing, spreadsheets, presentations and more. Specifics of utility billing processes were covered. For example, what troubleshooting should be conducted to guard against mistakes; what information should board or council members be reviewing to fulfill their responsibility to the public they serve? While not everything about office automation could be covered in a single day, this session 'cornered' some of the most pertinent issues for today's modern utility office.

Resolving Disputes in a Neighborly Way

A total of 46 people from cities and RWDs are hopefully better equipped to deal with dispute resolution as they attended the preconference session on the topic. Rather than running away from conflict, this session taught how to turn conflicts into solutions people can agree on. Gary Flory, Great Plains Consensus Council and Ken Grotewiel, formerly the Assistant Director of the Kansas Water Office, provided attendees with new tools and approaches on how

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best to resolve conflicts. Armed with numerous real-world experiences, the presenters led breakouts where participants evaluated how to best approach case situations involving mediation. From dealing with customers to working with other water suppliers, this session should help people address conflicts in the workplaces and communities. KRWA provided a refund to board/council members who submitted early registration and attended. A total of 18 refunds were made for those attending this session.

Content Management Systems for Web Sites

This preconference class was loaded with information to help both beginners and experienced users deal with Web site Content Management Systems. The basics of

Web site publishing were covered as were advanced topics, offering concrete advice and practice to those who need to build a site from scratch or who want to rework an existing site into a CMS. Jen Sharp of JenSharp.com presented this lab-styled seminar. Topics included where to secure a domain name and hosting that supports CMS, structuring content and navigation and focusing on solid content that gets you noticed and your site frequented.

How to Troubleshoot Wastewater Lagoon Systems

It was a first-time presentation in Kansas by Steve Harris of H&S Environmental, LLC – and judging from session attendance and participation, it won't be the last. This session helped operators discover new tools to optimize a lagoon's performance and yet keep the system in compliance. The session helped train on reducing BOD, improving TSS removal, odor control, sludge reduction,

nutrient removal and getting more years of dependable service out of the lagoon system. The 11 possible causes of high BOD and their 50 possible solutions was but one example of session topics that intrigued attendees.

Steve's years of the best operational experience and problem solving techniques have been summarized in his book: Wastewater Lagoon Troubleshooting, an Operator's Guide to Solving Problems and Optimizing Wastewater Lagoon Systems. The book is available through Steve's website www.lagoonops.com and was available for purchase at the session.



Gary Flory, Great Plains Consensus Council, leads preconference session Resolving Disputes in a Neighborly Way

Learning More About Distribution Systems

Nearly 350 operators and others jammed the Hyatt Ballroom for the session concerning distribution systems. From the introduction of basic principles of hydraulics to operators who often have no formal training in water engineering, this presentation reviewed the relationships of piping, storage and system modeling for efficient operation of a water utility. Jim Challis, P.E., Ponzer – Youngquist explained static and dynamic behaviors, pipe flow, valves and fittings, water hammer and pumps. Many customers of public water system have critical needs to have water service 100% of the time. These may include hospitals, industry, nursing homes, etc. In order to maintain water service it may be necessary to make repairs on pipelines without disrupting service. Bob Hennig, Municipal Pipe Services, discussed line stopping, valve insertion and tapping to isolate the section of line needing repairs. J. D. Stephenson of CertainTeed Corporation presented information on restrained PVC pipeline, fittings and spacers. Attendees learned about PVC vs. other types of pipe, both metallic and plastic pipe, and the advantages of PVC over metallic pipe. A short review on pipe bursting, casings, joint restraints and thrust blocking was also included.

Making Friends with Your Locators – From Pipelines to Leaks

How to find that pipe! This session provided many answers as the morning portion gave information on the function and operation of locators, and best practices for using a pipe or cable locator. Topics covered included how a locator works – and why it doesn't; correct operation, confirming locate accuracy and what accessories are needed. The proper selection and installation of tracer wire drew numerous questions. Leak detection with the use of data loggers was reviewed. A case study at McDonald, KS was of keen interest. Jim Grimes who has more than 20 years of experience in the locate business and Travis Beran of Subsurface Solutions, presented information in a practical and easy to understand manner.

KanCap: Improving Management of Kansas Water Systems

The board/council training "KanCap" was attended by 47 people. The training is designed to help board and council members but staff were also welcomed. KRWA's Bert Zerr, Cathy Tucker-Vogel from Kansas Dept. of Health and Environment and RoseMary Saunders, Ranson Financial Consultants, provided the training modules on management and financial aspects. All attendees were able to take a copy of the 300-page training handbook and the interactive CD

back to their respective city or RWD. The KanCap project includes 51 videos, numerous quizzes and more than 216 additional references within the project. The bonus this year? Board/council members who registered early and attended the full day session qualified for a refund of their registration fee. A total of 32 refunds were offered. These represented 13 rural water or public wholesale districts and eight cities. Butler RWD 7 voted unanimously to return the refund. John Cleveland's letter included this remark: "We received a check for \$100 for a refund for the registration fee. We really appreciated the gesture but the (RWD) Board voted unanimously to return it because we are the ones to receive the benefit for all that KRWA does for rural water districts in Kansas."

Dealing with Difficult Customers; Improving Presentations

Jeremy Hall, of Creative Business Solutions in Topeka, covered the gamut of personality traits and personnel issues in this session. The 27 attendees easily identified with problems associated with dealing with difficult customers as most were utility office staff. Hall explained how to identify the reasons customers become upset, how the utility staff member can determine what he/she can control and how to problem solve for a win-win situation. The style of dress, a person's communication skills and body language also are factors in customer response. How to project a positive and professional image was the focus. The training was applauded by those attending who have also registered interest in future topics. The second portion of this session was to have been a tutorial on clear, concise business writing, however the group spent the entire day on the topic of dealing with customers. Attendees left with good information that will help them in their city or rural water office and in their personal lives.



Jeremy Hall, Creative Business Solutions, leads a discussion Dealing With Difficult Customers.