

Utilities Section Newsletter

League of Nebraska Municipalities

January 2024

2024 UTILITIES AND PUBLIC WORKS ANNUAL CONFERENCE



Photos 1, 3, 4: Vendors shared information about their company services with Utilities and Public Works Conference attendees. Photo 2: Attendees listen as Tara Stingley presents on the topic of effective employee evaluations. Photos by Ashley Wolfe

By Lash Chaffin,
Utilities Section Director

Thank you to everyone who, despite sub-zero temperatures and two blizzards, joined us for the 2024 League of Nebraska Municipalities Utilities/Public Works Section Annual Conference in Lincoln. The highlight of the Conference was the election of Duane Hoffman, Oxford Public Works Director, as the 2024 Utilities Section President. Other officers elected include:

- 1st Vice President Pat Heath, City Administrator of Gering
- 2nd Vice President Gary Thurlow, Utility Superintendent of Atkinson
- Board Member Sarah Sawin, Assistant Director of Utilities of Kearney
- Board Member Matt Owens, Water & Wastewater Supervisor of Imperial
- Board Member Jeramie Van Leer, Utility Superintendent of Ord
- Ex Officio Member Layne Groseth, City Administrator/Utilities Manager of North Platte

The conference kicked off with an optional Preconference Seminar on Financing,

Managing and Maintaining Municipal Utility Infrastructure in Today's Crazy and Rapidly Changing World!!! Before an abrupt cancellation of the last day of the conference due to rapidly declining statewide weather conditions, conference attendees also enjoyed educational sessions on:

- Use of Personal Cell Phones and Other Public Records Issues Employees Need to Think About
- New and Innovative Health Insurance Options for Municipal Employees
- Remote Utility Infrastructure: Turning vulnerability into resilience

- New Innovative Health Insurance Options for Municipalities

Continued on page 2

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UTILITIES SECTION

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Lash Chaffin
Utilities Section Director
Rob Pierce
Utilities Field Representative

2024 Utilities and Public Works Annual Conference

Continued from page 1

- Understanding Your Utilities History Benefits Customers
- Effective Employee Evaluations
- Considerations for Hiring Seasonal Workers
- Per- and Polyfluorinated (PFA) Substances Update: Yes, this is real.
- Are Small Nuclear Power Units in Your Future for Well Houses and Other Remote Facilities
- Acceptable Utility and Public Works Rules for Customers
- Office Safety
- When Do You Need to Hire an Engineer?

Those operators attending the Preconference could receive up to 5 hours of water grades 1-4 and 5 hours of wastewater. A total of 12 hours of wastewater and 12 hours of water grades 1-4 were available for attending the Preconference and the first full day of the conference. Credit hours turned into the state for the conference also will be posted on the League’s website at lonm.org/utilities/water-and-wastewater-credit-hours.html.

Participating systems included: Albion, Ashland, Atkinson, Auburn, Aurora, Blair, Broken Bow, Ceresco, Coleridge, Cozad BPW, Crete, Em-

erson, Exeter, Falls City Utilities, Franklin, Garland, Geneva, Gering, Gibbon, Hickman, Holdrege, Imperial, Kearney, Loup City, Lyons, Madison, McCook, Minden, Nebraska City Utilities, Norfolk, North Platte, Ogallala, O’Neill, Oxford, Papillion, Pender, Phillips, Plattsmouth, Randolph, Sargent, Schuyler, Scribner, Shelby, South Sioux City, Stuart, Superior Utilities, Sutton, Uehling, Valley, Wahoo, Wakefield, Wauneta, Wilber, and Wisner.

Be sure to mark your calendars and attend the 2025 conference to be held in Lincoln at the Embassy Suites Hotel on Jan. 8-10.

Manual Uniform Traffic Control Devices

The current edition (11th Edition) of the Manual Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) is dated December 2023 (to be updated every four years). When an updated version is put out, each state evaluates the new version for changes pertinent to their state to

see if the changes need adopted. The current adopted federal version by Nebraska is the 2009 version, along with the Nebraska 2019 supplement to be followed.

The Work Zone Workshops the past two years covered the MUTCD with an emphasis on the chapter

relating to temporary work zone set. More information can be found at the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) website dot.nebraska.gov or the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration website at mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov.

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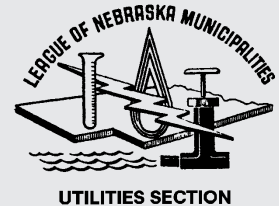
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Ex Officio Member
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City Administrator and
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North Platte

Nebraska utilities history – Kimball

The Utilities Section Newsletter will continue to feature histories of both utilities and associate members. Any historical data and/or photos of your utilities, a specific facility, or articles already written are welcome, along with permission to print. If you have questions, contact Rob at 402-476-2829 or robp@lonm.org.

By Rob Pierce, Utilities Field Rep./Training Coordinator

Kimball, located in Kimball County, was once a part of Cheyenne County, which was organized in 1871. A stage route operated from Kimball through Wildcat range to Gering. The Union Pacific Railroad reached the site about 1867-70 and initially consisted of a siding, coal station, and section house with telegraph on the south side of the tracks. The station, which was to provide water for the steam engines, was called Antelope and was basically a railroad worker camp. Antelope was a stop in 1874 with depot (likely a box car) which soon included a saloon/residence. There are two different dates for when the first post office was established. One noted 1877 and the other on July 27, 1882, both mentions Antelopeville with the first postmaster John J. McIntosh. A pioneer school was held in an adobe structure taught by Mary Lynch (one source noted the first school was established in 1879 and another in 1880). First settlement for the new community

began about 1885 as the number of lots almost doubled from 1883. A townsite was laid out on the north side of the tracks by the Bay State Livestock Company. The *Western Nebraska Observer* newspaper was established in 1885 and a general mercantile store was operating.

On Oct. 23, 1885, the name of the post office changed from Antelopeville to Kimball, named after Thomas Kimball, a railroad official. The Kimball Public Library Dime Society was organized about 1886. A two-story frame building, which had been erected in 1874 as a saloon, was moved in 1887 to the present grade school site with an addition later built. Citizens met in 1887 to discuss digging a town water well but due to lack of funding, it was postponed. The town was supplied by the railroad well. The Union Pacific Railroad granted a three-month extension for use of water from their well but felt the town was too large to share with the railroad. Businessmen proposed laying an eight-inch main from a well near the creek to a reservoir at the top of the hill at the south end of Chestnut Street. The

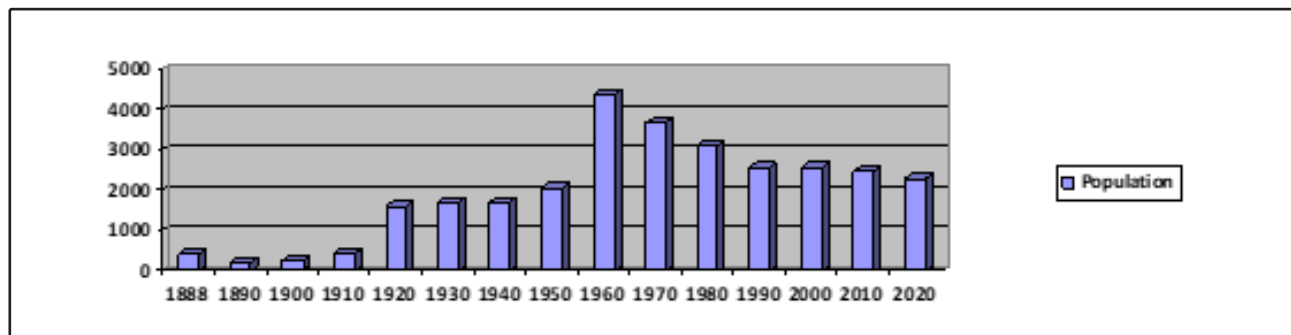


Kimball water tank. 2010 photo.

town voted 48-6 to build a water system. On Nov. 6, 1888, Kimball County separated from Cheyenne County and on Jan. 22, 1889, Kimball won the county seat over Dix. The first meeting was held in a two-story frame building on the main street before later moving to the hotel building. About 1888, with a population at 451, Kimball was incorporated as a village and a cemetery district was formed.

By 1890, the population was 193 (one source listed 250) and some of the businesses operating included a Biggs Lumber business, Bank of Kimball, a newspaper, a grocery store, a blacksmith shop, a flour/feed store, a hardware store,

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Nebraska utilities history – Kimball

Continued from page 3

a restaurant, Hotel Martha, an ag implement dealer, a druggist, a millinery, a shoemaker, and three churches (Methodist, Lutheran, and Congregational). A two-story frame courthouse was built in 1890 with bonds of \$5,000 (site of present park) and an irrigation project was approved with \$30,000 in bonds. By March 1897, due to a lack of funding, the town's marshal position was eliminated and in 1899, there was a solicitation for Library Association members.

The population by 1900 was 254

and construction was underway in 1905 on a waterworks, which included a tower by 1907. A telephone line was run in 1902 from Sidney to Kimball called the Independent Telephone Company. The first telephone was hooked up in 1903 from the blacksmith shop to a ranch located west of town. Some businesses included the Kimball Hotel, a Fraternal Hall built in 1905, and cement sidewalks were installed in the business area about 1907. Electric lights first came to town when Pat Maginnis had an electric plant put in his irrigation

flume factory. Voters authorized the formation of a county wide school in 1907 and the first county high school was built in 1908-09.

In 1910, the population increased to 454 as fire protection included a new hose cart, talk of organizing a fire department in September, and the first fire practice was held in December. Mr. Miller of Greeley arranged to build an electric system for Kimball and by 1913, electric line, lights, and power poles were installed. The Brown Hotel opened for business in 1914 which had

Continued on page 5

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electric lights and steam baths. About 1915, a building was erected by the power plant and an ice plant was started. By May 1915, water project bonds of \$8,000 at 6% were approved and were due May 1, 1935. Water soon was being pumped using power from the electric plant which consisted of a 75-horsepower (HP) gas engine with a generator rating of 50 kilovolt amps (kVA) operated by the Kimball Electric Light & Power Company. In May 1917, residents voted to build a sewer system and by June, trenches were dug. The village acquired all the holdings of the Kimball Electric Light and Artificial Ice plant in 1918 and by summer, a bond issue was passed for a municipal electric plant to provide 24-hour service. The council signed a contract to have “electroliers” placed in the center of downtown streets. The Wheat Grower Hotel was built for \$100,000 in 1918 and opened in December.

In 1920, the population reached 1,620 and street paving was issued with a few downtown streets paved and two more sections planned. A meeting was held, and Mr. Tritt was to pave with bricks at \$4.88 a square yard for three-inch brick paving with a three-year guarantee. The

Lincoln Highway, which started in 1913 and completed about 1927, ran parallel to the railroad tracks through Kimball (later became Highway 30).

On May 1, 1921, Kimball was incorporated as a city (one source noted it had become a city of the second class in 1922), a hundred years ago. The water system in the 1920s had a cone-topped water storage tower located southwest of the business block. The library was moved to the basement of Brown Hotel in 1919 and then moved again in 1921 to a location over the post office. By 1924, the library was located to the back of the new city hall building. In 1925, the Main Street had gas pumps that were located in the sidewalk on the west side of Main Street (across the street to the east was the Maginnis Hotel). The municipal water system had rates of \$0.15 per 1,000 gallons and a minimum of \$1.50 for 1,000 gallons. The municipal power plant had rates of \$0.13 per kilowatt (kW) with a minimum at \$1.25. The fire department in 1927 had 40 members. A granite courthouse was built in 1928 for \$185,000 and the 1890 frame courthouse was retired. In 1929, land formerly used by the courthouse was leased to the city

for a park, the \$1 lease was to run for 99 years if it was used as a park.

The population in 1930 increased to 1,711, municipal wells were drilled in the early 1930s, and work began on a Public Works Association (PWA) project to construct an airport for \$6,400 in the mid 1930s. The electric distributions system was operated by Kimball Municipal Utilities and in 1936, the municipal power plant had a capacity of 1,018 kW using internal combustion power generation. In 1939, an underpass ordinance was passed and by the fall of 1940, work began on the railroad underpass (to cost \$105,938) at Chestnut Street.

By 1940, the population was 1,725 and in June, an application for a Works Progress Administration (WPA) labor to build a high school was approved. The \$19,000 addition to the school (gymnasium, classroom, band room, and vocational ag/home economics areas was voted on and approved. A new diesel generation unit was purchased for the municipal power plant. In 1945, steps were taken for an airport with a resolution passed by the council in April. A location three miles south of town was

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Nebraska utilities history – Kimball

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acquired for \$40 per acre with the first hangar built in May. Runway construction began in 1946 and hangars were built in 1947. By 1947, the airport had three turf runways. The rural fire department was organized in 1946 with a truck purchased in May 1947.

In 1950, the population was 2,048 and in June 1951, oil was discovered in the area and at one time, there were 28 producers in the city limits. In the 1950s, the population increased to nearly 5,000 and many of the streets were paved as street ordinances were passed in 1954. By 1956, 85 blocks had been paved. The municipal-owned electrical diesel plant (capacity of 3,700 kWh) and distribution system (25 miles) had 1,200 meters with a meter deposit of \$12.50. The cost of street lighting was \$3,400 and the cost of pumping water was \$0.025 in 1956. Electric rates were: first 40 kWh at \$0.075, next 60 kWh at \$0.035, and all over at \$0.025 with a minimum of \$1. The publicly owned sewer system and disposal plant in 1956 were maintained by a \$1 sewer charge. Garbage was collected by the municipality for both residents and business for \$1 per month and the natural gas

system was supplied by a private company. The city-owned cemetery was maintained by a 0.366 mill levy and the swimming pool, which cost \$60,000, was self-supporting. The water system drilled a new well, installed mains, and a million-gallon water storage tank was erected. The water system had 900 meters in service and water rates were: the first 2,000 gallons (gals.) at a \$2.50 minimum, the next 8,000 gals. at \$0.20, next 10,000 gals. at \$0.15, next 30,000 gals. at \$0.13, and over 50,000 gals. at \$0.10. The volunteer fire department had 30 volunteer firefighters in 1956 and a new fire hall was built on 2nd and Howard Streets in 1957. The Nebraska Supreme Court ruled in 1957 that the city was the owner of oil under the streets and Kimball gained the title of the “Oil Capital of Nebraska.” In March 1958, the Board of Public Works was established and an expansion of the sewage disposal plant was planned at a cost of \$77,740 as the new sewage plant was state approved by 1959.

The population was 4,384 by 1960 and excavation was underway for the Atlas Missile project. The Kimball Municipal Utilities power plant had diesel generation units installed

in 1944, 1955, and 1959-60. The water system had 1,500 meters in service and the Gotte Park was leased from Kimball County. The airport expanded with new hangars and a paved runway. Thirteen districts started paving along with a highway widening project. The sewer system and lagoon were maintained by a tax levy amounting to \$6,000 and a sewer charge of \$1.75 per month. The initial Atlas Missile site was completed in 1961 with construction on more sites in 1962-63 which increased the population to an estimated 8,000 residents. A new library building on Walnut Street was approved in 1966, completed in December, and dedicated in 1967. The electric generation and distribution system was owned/operated by the city. In the late 1960s toward the end of missile construction, the city had a decline in population. The city cut the electric rates by 10 percent as authorized by the Kimball Utility Board after the department became debt free. Revenue bonds were paid off with a small reserve built up.

By 1970, the population was 3,680 and by 1971, an electric improvement project was started, estimated at \$130,000, including

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a new high voltage line from the power plant to 8th Street to provide better voltage regulation and capable of handling higher loads. An LSV-16 Cooper-Bessemer engine was installed at the power plant in 1974. In 1975, a \$355,000 project was underway at the Kimball County Manor Nursing Home and in 1976, an addition was added to the public library. By 1979-80, the city applied for grants to construct a swimming pool in Gotte Park.

In 1980, the population was 3,120 and in the summer, the city began purchasing electric power. Up to this point, all power had been provided by the municipal power plant. The power plant by 1981 was now listed as standby status.

September 1981 saw the merger of the city police department and the County Sheriff Department. The natural gas system was operated by the Kansas-Nebraska Natural Gas Company. In the 1980s, Waste-Tech Services Inc., purchased land for the site of a hazardous waste thermal combustion facility to be located on 640-acres south of the city for \$430 million and employed about 40. Work started in 1981 on the sewer system and the city had two disposal

plants (#1 Trickling Filter Plant and a two-lagoon system). A new swimming pool was built in 1984, a sewer disposal plant automation upgrade in 1986, and a new airport runway was dedicated in July 1987.

By 1990, the population was 2,574 and in 1997, the electric system was rebuilt with the 30-month project completed in 2000. The sewer disposal plant in 1999 was an activated sludge deep ditch system designed for 0.576 million gallons per day (mgd) with aerobic digester sludge treatment. The municipal power plant had a capacity of 5.95 megawatts. Old water wells in town were decommissioned (plugged) in 1998 and by 2000, the population was 2,559. A seven tower “wind farm” project was completed in September to be in operation by Oct. 1, 2002. The wind farm was to have a generation capacity of 10.5 megawatts of power, enough to power 4,000 homes and businesses. A 2003 sewer project included updating the wastewater treatment plant flow to 0.750 mgd.

The city operated three water wells located to the north and the city in 2004 was in the second year of a two-year program to adjust rates. In 2005, a \$200,000 upgrade to the

Kimball Event Center was started and the population by 2010 was 2,496. In 2010, the city extended water mains east on Highway 30, installed LED lighting, and began upgrading the electric system in 2012. The water system in 2013 pumped over 200 million gallons of water. The natural gas service was provided by Black Hills Energy in 2015. The old wind generators northwest of Kimball were being decommissioned in 2017 to be replaced by 12 new wind generators. The city acquired more land next to the current landfill in 2018 for expansion. The water department maintained approximately 30 miles of transmission and distribution mains, 435 water valves, 170 fire hydrants, curb stops, and approximately 1,400 water meters used to deliver approximately 170 million gallons of water per year.

Today, the population is 2,290 and increasing due to new projects by the government and the waste site south of Kimball. A new hospital facility is being built. Kimball has been incorporated for about 136 years and is a member of the League of Nebraska Municipalities and Utilities Section.

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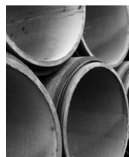
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Reminder: Backflow Program update

Has your system remembered to send out the backflow surveys and received them back from the customer? Once you get the surveys returned, make sure to review them and record the items that need to be followed up on, properly filed, and reported. Besides surveys sent and returned, remember to check that testers have tested all devices in the water system and the required reports turned in to the water system. Be sure to provide public education information to your customers which is required by the State of Nebraska.

Some water systems include backflow public information in with the billing envelopes, or articles/notices

in newsletters, the local newspaper, or on the radio. Postings also may be made on the village/city websites (Facebook), and the county or chamber of commerce websites. I have noticed postings in the U. S. Post Office. It is recommended to utilize a variety of avenues for posting the information as not everyone visits the sites or reads newspapers. Another option is having testers give out brochures with backflow information when they make visits to the homes/businesses to test or repair backflow devices. Backflow related items are the most noted deficiencies listed on the state's sanitary surveys performed by the field specialists.

QUESTION: What is backflow?

ANSWER: Backflow is the undesirable reversal of flow of nonpotable water or other substances through a cross-connection and into the piping of a public water system or consumer's potable water system. There are two types of backflow – backpressure backflow and backsiphonage.

Nebraska Breaktime Trivia “Just For Fun”

- Q-1.** In 2022, what was the most common post office name in the United States?
- Q-2.** Do you know how many Nebraska village/cities participated in the “Post Office Murals” program?
- Q-3.** How many villages/cities in Nebraska start with the letter N?

Answers on page 15.

Credit hours reminder

For those who attended the 2024 Snowball Conference and/or the 2024 Annual Utilities Conference, your water and wastewater hours will be posted soon on the League of Nebraska Municipalities website at lonm.org/utilities/water-and-wastewater-credit-hours.html.

Nebraska utilities history – Kimball

Continued from page 7

References: Nebraska Directory of Municipal Officials, 1956, 1956, 1960, 1964, 1987, 1990-2017, 2019-2023; Nebraska Municipal Review Magazine, 1925, 1971; Utilities Section Newsletter, 1959; Perkey's Nebraska Place Names, 1995; Water Resources of Nebraska, December 1936; Nebraska's Forest Service Newsletter, April 2002; Public Power Magazine, Vol. 51, Number 1, January-February 1993; Department of Energy Website, 2004; Kimball County Nebraska

100 Years (1888-1988), 1988; Kimball Internet website, 2004-2020; Star-Herald Newspaper, 2004; Lincoln Journal Star Newspaper, 2004; Kearney Hub Newspaper, 2004; Nebraska Our Towns...The Panhandle, 1988; Pages of History, Nebraska High Schools Past & Present, 1854-1994, 1994; Maps Tell a Story, 1991; NEDED Website, 2005; Who's Who in Nebraska, 1940; Nebraska State Gazetteer & Business Directory, 1890-91; Municipal Journal and Engineering, 1905; Electric Power

Development in the United States, Dept. of Agriculture, January 1916; Nebraska Blue Book, 1928, 1942, 1946, 1978; Biennial Report of Audits of Public Accounts to the Governor, 1935; U.S. Congressional Serial Set, House Document, Vol. 238, April 14, 1936; Directory of Electric Utilities in the United States, Federal Power Commission, 1941; Electric Rate Survey: and the Domestic and Residential Electric Rates in Effect January 1, 1935 by U.S. Federal Power Commission, 1935.

SAFETY/HEALTH CORNER

Working in cold weather

By Rob Pierce, Utilities Field Rep./Training Coordinator

If you must work in the cold, be sure to take proper precautions. Dress in layers (often three) of loose-fitting clothing but not too loose that it becomes a safety hazard. Tight clothing reduces blood flow.

Wear good, insulated gloves and boots. Avoid contact with cold surfaces with bare skin. Coverage is a must (face, ears, nose, fingers), especially the head. A lot of heat can be lost via the head (I should know). Some of us bald or follically challenged should have a good stocking cap handy. Our bodies need warm blood to be circulated

to warm the extremities such as feet, hands, face, nose, and ears. Breathing in extremely cold air can damage your lungs, so protect accordingly.

Be sure to drink warm liquids and avoid alcohol, even the night before the workday. When possible, try to stay dry and out of the wind. Personal protective equipment (PPE) clothing should resist or wick off water and moisture. Keep a change of dry clothing handy in case of excessive sweating or you get wet.

When possible, schedule indoor activities when wind chill temperature is 13 degrees or below. Working in cold weather requires more energy to keep

the body working. Plan ahead and discuss how to identify cold stress symptoms in your safety meetings before the weather gets cold. Be sure to monitor your physical condition along with coworkers around you. Extreme cold can be dangerous, especially to susceptible people which may be due to prescription medication or other health conditions. We already experienced some frigid temperatures in January 2024, so be prepared if we get more cold weather.

It is odd having daytime temperatures in the 60s and nights in the single digits or below. That is just wrong in my book.

Safety reminder on fall protection

Do a walk through of the office looking for tears or frays in carpeting or rugs. Be aware of blockages in walkways, clutter on stairways, or cords on the floor. Many items in the office or shop start out as being placed there temporarily, but somehow stay for extended periods of time. Never overload an outlet with a spiderweb of cords. Clean up all spills, debris, and chemical residue which may enhance a slick surface. Be sure to have mats or rugs at entrances in preparation for winter weather issues.

When setting up work sites, plan ahead and make sure you maintain three points of a ladder, firmly station the ladders base, and implement proper fall protection equipment

where needed. Make sure any scaffolding used meets OSHA requirements and ensure they are stable before use.

Be sure to address building or structure deficiencies which may include items such as loose railings or uneven stairs. Sometimes a change in elevation, inadequate footwear, distractions such as talking on the phone or carrying a load that hinders your view of where you are walking are all it takes for a fall to occur. Remember, a chair does not replace a step stool or ladder and report all fall incidents in case they develop into a medical issue later. Slips, trips, and falls would be a good safety topic for a safety meeting. Stay safe!

Postal rate increase

Effective Jan. 21, 2024, the cost of mailing letters, packages and other USPS services increased. One example is first class postage for letters increased from \$0.66 to \$0.68. Be sure your 2024 budget was adjusted to match the increases as many of our municipality's bill via post card and mail water samples to the labs for analysis.

The cost increases are relatively low (about 4.3%) but can add up depending on the volume mailed. For more information on changes that may affect your system such as changes of schedules, routes and/or costs, please be sure to contact your local post office.

Nebraska utilities history – Pierce

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By Rob Pierce, Utilities Field Rep./Training Coordinator

Pierce is located in Pierce County, which was listed as organized Jan. 26, 1856. Pierce was not surveyed until 1858, was created by the Territorial Legislature in 1859, and named after President Franklin Pierce (my ancestor).

German settlers began arriving from Wisconsin in the fall of 1866. A settlement was organized and located north of Willow Creek and west of the north fork of the Elkhorn River.

A special election was held in 1870 to officially organize a county with commissioners elected July 26, 1870.

A slab/sod house was built on the bank of Willow Creek by 1870, which served as a dwelling, post office, hotel, and courthouse. The post office was established Oct. 3, 1870. One source listed the community as being established Feb. 14, 1871, while a 56-block plat was apparently filed with the Pierce County Register of Deeds on May 4, 1871. The community plat listed street names, some of which were named after persons

who purchased the land or made additions to the city, such as Brown, Lucas, and Gibson. Two frame buildings were built with the third building serving as a hotel. One source noted the first courthouse was built in March 1871 for \$4,000 (another source listed 1872). The Hetzel Hotel was completed in 1872. A school also was built that year along with the Pioneer General Store established in 1873. In February 1875, Pierce County acquired some land that resulted in a permanent loss to Cedar County. In 1876, there was vote for \$88,000 in bonds to enable the Covington, Columbus & Black Hills Railroad to build their railroad through Pierce County. Also, there were \$60,000 in bonds for the Omaha, Niobrara & Black Hills Railroad to build from Norfolk to Pierce then on to the northern boundary of the county. On Oct. 6, 1877, the first newspaper was established named the *Pierce County Call*. The first church in town was established in 1878 as the Congregational Church. A country church, St. John’s Lutheran Church located just east of town, existed since 1871. The original dam for the mill was

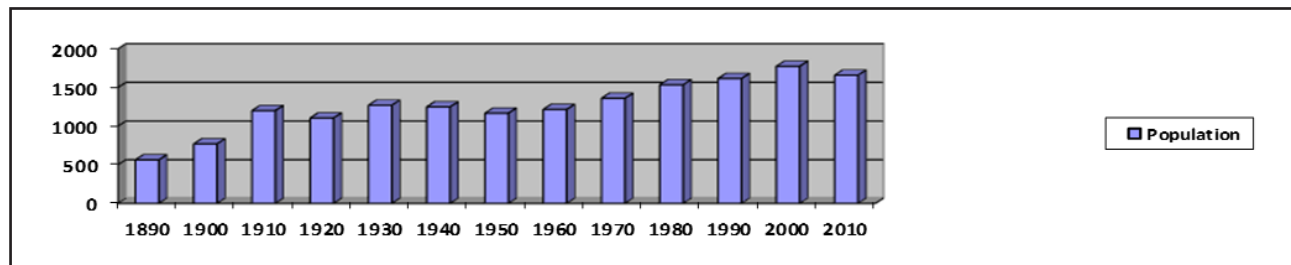


Pierce water storage tower. 2000 photo.

built in 1878 and constructed out of brick. It was noted the population in 1879 was 87 but the 1880 census noted 73 when the Sioux City and Pacific Railroad Company built from Norfolk through the county to Creighton in Knox County.

The S.F. Gilman Flour Mill (Pierce Milling Company) was built in 1880 with a mill pond dam and reservoir on the north fork of the Elkhorn River. The Sioux City & Pacific Railroad frame depot was built (1880) and by 1882, the population was about 100 and the first bank was established. Other

Continued on page 11



Nebraska utilities history – Pierce

Continued from page 10

businesses included a hotel, two general stores, a drug store, an ag implement dealer, a lumberyard, and a newspaper. On May 24, 1883, Pierce was incorporated as a village and a 10-block addition was added. In 1884, the 32-block Gibson addition was added with a cemetery established in 1885. In 1889, a second newspaper *The Leader* was established and in 1889-90, a three-story brick courthouse was built for \$25,000, replacing the original structure (one block north).

By 1890, the population increased to 563 and the First National Bank name was changed to the Cones State Bank in 1897. By 1900, the population increased to 770, the first fire department was started with a single hose cart in 1902, and Henzler & Craven provided electricity using 60 horsepower (HP) in 1905. On Nov. 8, 1908, the Gilman Mill, built in 1880, was destroyed by fire.

By 1910, the population was 1,200 and in 1912, the Pierce Milling Company was operating using both

water and steam power. The rebuilt flour mill used electricity generated by its own power plant which also provided electricity to the entire City of Pierce in 1913 (now site of the city park lake). In 1915, the fire department had 40 volunteer firefighters, a hook/ladder truck, and two hose carts with 1,800 feet (ft) of cotton/rubber lined hose. The municipal waterworks cost \$12,000 with rates at \$0.20 per 1,000 gallons.

In 1920, the population increased
Continued on page 12



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Nebraska utilities history – Pierce

Continued from page 11
to 1,105 and the first street paving was completed in the village. In August 1922, the city voted for bonds to build a new high school. The three-story brick school was built in 1923. Electricity in 1925 was provided via transmission lines with rates of \$1.80 per lamp per month. The Iowa-Nebraska Light & Power Company provided electricity. By 1928, Pierce was a city of the second class after about 45 years as a village.

The population increased to 1,271 in 1930 and the old Gilman Mill was destroyed by fire in 1932. The city acquired the former mill site from the Gilman family heirs in 1935 and the dam was rebuilt by the Federal Relief Administration. The park was named in honor of the Gilman family. On Jan. 1, 1935, the electric distribution system was operated by Iowa-Nebraska Light & Power Company. By 1936, the Iowa Nebraska Light & Power Company's power plant had a capacity of 120 kilowatts (kW) of steam power generation.

By 1940, the population was 1,249 and in the spring of 1941, the Iowa Nebraska Light & Power Company properties were purchased by Consumers Public Power District. On Oct. 9, 1941, the city purchased the electrical system for \$89,200 from Consumers Public Power District and the electric department was established.

The population increased to 1,167 by 1950 and the railroad discontinued passenger service to Pierce in 1951. In 1956, the municipal electric system had 40 miles of lines, 890 meters in service, and current was supplied by Consumers Public Power District at a wholesale cost of \$0.0113

per kilowatt hour (kWh). The cost of street lighting amounted to \$3,411.35. The water system had a water main extension project in 1956. The water plant had 355 meters in service with a meter deposit of \$5. The cost of current for pumping water was \$1,069.04. Water rates for a minimum of 9,000 gallons (gals.) at \$3 per quarter, then next 12,000 gals. at \$0.175 per 1,000 gals., next 24,000 gals. at \$0.15 per 1,000 gals., next 36,000 gals. at \$0.125 per 1,000 gals., next 60,000 gals. at \$0.10 per 1,000 gals., with excess at \$0.075 per 1,000 gals. The natural gas was furnished by Central Electric & Gas Company. The sewer system was publicly owned and operated. In 1958, the cost of street lighting was \$3,515.81 and the cost of current for pumping water was \$1,173.48. Garbage was collected by a private collector with a charge of \$1 per month on up.

In 1960, the population was 1,216 and the electric system had 40 miles of lines with 990 meters in service and was supplied by Consumers Public Power District at a wholesale cost of \$0.0116 per kWh. The municipal water plant had 420 meters in service. The city operated a 28 ft x 42 ft x 77 ft swimming pool, which was financed by \$32,500 in bonds. The municipal sewer system in 1962 had a charge of \$1 per month and up. The nine-hole Pierce Community Golf Course, located one mile to the

northwest, was completed in 1964 (expanded in 1992). In 1968, the former depot facilities were closed and the wood depot was moved six-blocks to Gilman Park.

References: Nebraska Directory of Municipal Officials, 1956, 1958, 1960, 1962, 1964-75, 1977-87, 1990-1995, 1997-98, 2000, 2002-2023; Nebraska Municipal Review, 1925, 1962, 2018; Water Resources of Nebraska, Dec. 1936; Nebraska Place Names, 1925, 1960; Nebraska Traveler Magazine, 2003; Nebraska's Forest Service Newsletter, April 2002; Lincoln Journal Star newspaper, 2001; Public Power Magazine, Vol. 51, Number 1, Jan.-Feb. 1993; Nebraska Our Towns... North Northeast, 1990; Maps Tell Nebraska's History, 1991; NMPP Energy News, 1996; NEDED Website, 2005; City of Pierce website, 2018; Wikipedia website, 2019; Andrea's History of the State of Nebraska, 1882; BLS Report 1905-06, 1907; Essent Magazine, 2010 Nebraska Blue Book, 1928, 1942, 1946, 1978; Department of the Interior Bureau of Mines: Commercial Trend of the Reducer-Gas Power Plant in the US, 1913; The Insurance Yearbook 1915-16 Fire and Marine 43rd Annual Issue, 1915; and the Federal Power Consumers Electric Rate Survey, Domestic and Residential Electric Rates in Effect Jan. 1, 1935 in the State of Nebraska, 1935.

Backflow Workshops

Four "Backflow" workshops were held in Beatrice, Wayne, Ogallala, and Grand Island with 140 operators in attendance. This was one of the lowest attendances in the past 10 years. Next year's Backflow Workshops have been scheduled for August 2024.

Chadron receives water, wastewater awards

The Chadron water and wastewater systems and staff were honored with awards at the 2023 Annual AWWA/NWEA Conference held in Kearney the first week of November. Chadron was recognized by the AWWA for a safety award along with the coveted “Burke Safety

Award.” Systems must apply and qualify three consecutive years to qualify for the Burke Safety Award. Torey Zuver, Utilities Superintendent, received the AWWA Outstanding Supervisory Operator Award. *(Photos provided by the City of Chadron.)*



Pictured from left to right: Ryan Shield, Jared Maez, Torey Zuver, Sam Brodrick, and Ray Thewke.



Torey Zuver receives AWWA Outstanding Supervisory Operator Award.

Hard hats

An Occupational Safety & Health Association (OSHA) press release noted that its personnel were switching to “safety helmets” over the traditional hard hats to protect them at job sites.

Traditional hard hats have minimal side-impact protection and often doesn't provide chin straps. A third concern was the lack of ventilation as heat can be trapped inside the hat. The safety helmets can be made up of a combination of materials such as lightweight composites, fiberglass, and thermoplastics. They can incorporate the use of face shields, goggles, and hearing protection along with communications systems in noisy environments.

These “helmets” are recommended for use in construction, oil/gas industries, electrical work at heights, high-temperature specialized work areas, and in any industry required by regulations of policies. Like many changes, there are pro and con comments between the use of helmets and the “looser” hard hats.

2024 NFPA Changes

Changes in the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards such those pertaining to interior exit door signage, carbon monoxide detection and portable fire extinguishers to name a few can be found at the NFPA website at nfpa.org. NFPA is a nonprofit association founded in 1896 that recommends code/standards (300) which are revised or updated every three to five years with revision

cycle twice a year. They also have provided innovative research, professional training, and public education.

January is Member Appreciation Month

As the National Safety Council recognizes January as **Member Appreciation Month**, the Utilities Section would like to take this opportunity to thank the Utilities Section Members and Associate Members which provide support to the section's success. [Click here](#) for a complete list of our members.

The Utilities Section provides important information, represents

municipalities in the Legislature, hosts other meetings, and provides training opportunities throughout the year.

Again, we want to celebrate “Member Appreciation Month” by thanking you. Also, if your system or individual would like to be more active in the Utilities Section, contact the League office at info@lonm.org.

Check out the League's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/leaguene. Be sure to “Like” us.

2024 Snowball Conference

The 33rd Annual Snowball Wastewater Conference was held Jan. 24-25, 2024, at the Kearney Holiday Inn. The conference was cosponsored by the League of Nebraska Municipalities-Utilities Section and the Nebraska Water Operators Committee (NWOC) of the Nebraska Water Environment Association (NWEA), a member of the National Water Federation (WEF). This year, the conference attendance totaled about 225 with 166 operators in attendance. The past 33 years, more than 7,700 operators, engineers, and wastewater-related company representatives have participated at this conference with over 334 hours of recertification “relicensing” credit for wastewater participants. Licensed **wastewater attendees received 10.25 hours** toward their wastewater relicensing, **water operators received up to 4.0 hours for grades 1-4, and 1.0 hour for grade 6**, if they attended (signed-in) the designated sessions noted on the agenda. (Four sessions at this year’s conference received water credits.)

Certificates were not issued this year, but hours are posted on the League website (lonm.org) that were submitted to the state to be posted on the operators’ portal records. The League keeps the past two years of Snowball attendance lists with hours on the website. Each operator is required by the state to keep track of his/her own training hours. If you have questions on credit hours for this conference, contact the League office.

The conference morning sessions included: Importance System Maintenance, Basic Activated Sludge, Basics of Collection System Maintenance, and Wastewater

Lagoon Operation/Maintenance. The afternoon sessions included: The Art of the Possible: Pump Curves and System Head Curves, Why You Need to do an ARC Flash Study, Go West Young Man (testing), NPDES Support Services, Cross Connection Issues, and Sewer Rehabilitation (manholes/lining).

On Jan. 25 following the operator breakfast, Scott Seelhoff of Fremont provided an NWEA and NWOC update on activities of the association. The morning sessions included Operator Certification and NDEE staff update along with a Liability/Financial Update and the Components of a Good Safety/ Training Program.

Speakers included: Monte Dakan, Johnson Service; Eric Deter, Mellon & Associates; Nicholas Willis, Wichita State University; Brian Gongol, Gongol & Associates Inc.; Darrin Cielocha, Farris Engineering; Curtis Christensen, NDEE; Mark Pomajzl, JEO Consulting Group; Marty Ostransky, Midwest Assistance Program (MAP); Scott Seelhoff, City of Fremont; Mike McBride, Phillip Halstead, Jeff Stittle, Tim Lundeen of NDEE; along with Lash Chaffin and Rob Pierce, League of Nebraska Municipalities-Utilities Section.

A special “thank you” to the Holiday Inn for once again providing excellent facilities and delicious food for the conference event. A special thank you to the following companies (listed alphabetically) that supported this year’s Snowball Conference by providing exhibits, speakers, and/or sponsorship, which always ensures the conference to be a big success.

- Atlas Automation LLC
- Axiom Instrumentation Services

- **Core & Main**
- DJ Gongol & Associates, Inc.
- EES
- **Electric Pump, LLC**
- Farris Engineering
- GPM Environmental Solutions, LLC
- Gurney & Associates, Inc.
- Hach, Inc.
- **HOA Solutions Inc.**
- HTM Sales
- Iowa Pump Works, Inc.
- JCI Industries Inc.
- **JEO Consulting Group, Inc.**
- **Johnson Service Company**
- **Lincoln Winworks**
- Macqueen Equipment
- **Maguire Iron, Inc.**
- Mellon & Associates
- **Miller & Associates Consulting Engineers, P.C.**
- **Mongan Painting**
- Modern Coating Solutions LLC/ Tnemec
- **Municipal Supply Inc. of Nebraska**
- Nebraska Energy Federal Credit Union
- Nebraska Department of Energy & Environment
- **Nebraska Generator Service**
- Northwest Electric
- **Rose Equipment**
- **USDA Rural Development**
- Vessco, Inc
- Wichita State University

Those **listed in BOLD** are 2023-2024 League/Utilities Section Associate Members.

The following dates for **future “Snowball” Wastewater Conferences** have been scheduled and contracts signed with the Kearney Holiday Inn:

- Jan. 22-23, 2025
- Jan. 28-29, 2026
- Jan. 27-28, 2027
- Jan. 26-27, 2028

Crow Line: A line of positive communication that all can share

By Rob Pierce, Utilities Field Rep./Training Coordinator



Congratulations! Incorporation Anniversary Recognition: 130 years – **Pleasanton** (1894-village); 140 years – Doniphan (1884-village), **Hartington** (1884-city second class), Springfield (1884-city second class), **Stuart** (1884-village), **Valentine** (1884-city second class), and Valley (1884-city second class); and 145 years – Firth (1879-village).

Utilities Section members and associate members highlighted in bold.

Wastewater systems received safety awards at the annual NWEA banquet. **10+ operators** – Gold: Fremont and Grand Island Wastewater Treatment Facility. Silver: Missouri River Water Resource Recovery Facility. **5-9 Operators** – Gold: Columbus Wastewater Treatment Facility, City of Norfolk WPC, Scottsbluff Water Reclamation Facility, and the Theresa Street Water Resource Recovery Facility. Silver: Wahoo Wastewater Treatment Plant. **1-4 Operators** – Gold: Chadron and Northwest Water Resource Recovery Facility. Silver: North Platte Wastewater Treatment Plant. **Lagoon** – Gold: Village of Denton Sanitary Sewer Lagoon. **Industrial** – Gold: Michael Foods Inc., Platte Valley Energetics and Tyson Fresh Meats Inc.-Lexington Wastewater. Silver: Hornaday Manufacturing Company.

The Scott Wilber Awards Committee honored 18 Nebraska facilities. The **Scott Wilber Award** recognizes wastewater treatment facilities for outstanding facility maintenance, performance,

personnel training, community involvement and overall condition of their facility. The facilities are categorized as industrial or municipal facilities. The municipal facilities are categorized by daily average flow, small systems under 2 million gallons per day (mgd), Medium 2-5 mgd and large at over 5 mgd. Within each category, a “Best in Class” also is honored. For 2023, the following were honored – **Industrial Facilities:** Michael Foods Wastewater Treatment Plant of Wakefield, Platte Valley Energetics, Tyson Fresh Meats Inc. - Lexington Wastewater, and the Industrial Best in Class – Hornaday Manufacturing Company. **Small Facilities (<2 mgd):** Village of Denton Wastewater Treatment Facility, City of Aurora Water Resource Recovery Facility, Wahoo Wastewater Treatment Facility, Chadron wastewater Treatment Facility and the Small System Best in Class – City of

Scottsbluff Water Reclamation Facility. **Medium Facilities (2-5 mgd):** City of Columbus, City of Norfolk Water Pollution Control, City of North Platte Wastewater Treatment Facility, and Medium Facility Best in Class – City of Kearney Wastewater Treatment Facility. **Large Facilities (>5 mgd):** City of Fremont Wastewater Treatment Plant, City of Grand Island Wastewater Treatment Facility, City of Lincoln Northeast Water Resource Recovery Facility, City of Omaha Missouri River Water Resource Recovery Facility, and Large Facility Best in Class – Lincoln Theresa Street Water Resource Recovery Facility.

Do you, your department, or facility have something to crow about? Received an award, had an article written highlighting an event or person, or have a project you want to acknowledge in the *Utilities Section Newsletter*?

Let us help you celebrate events and accomplishments! Please send information to any of the League/Utilities staff at info@lonm.org.

“Just For Fun” Answers

A-1. Clinton was the most common with 26, followed by Madison-25, Franklin-24, Washington-24, Marion-23, Chester-22, Greenville-22, Springfield-22, Georgetown-21, and Salem-21.

A-2. 12 (Albion, Auburn, Crawford, Geneva, Hebron, Minden, Ogallala, O’Neill, Pawnee City, Red Cloud, Schuy-

ler, and Valentine)

A-3. 19 (Naper, Naponee, Nebraska City, Nehawka, Neligh, Nelson, Nemaha, Nenzel, Newcastle, Newman Grove, Newport, Nickerson, Niobrara, Nora, Norfolk, Norman, North Bend, North Loup, and North Platte.) *Reference: 2023 Nebraska Directory of Municipal Officials.*

Classifieds

Apprentice Lineman. City of Benkelman is accepting applications for the position of Apprentice Lineman in the Electric Department. This position's responsibilities include, but aren't limited to: Construction and maintenance of overhead and underground electric distribution systems, operate a high lift bucket truck, digger derrick, and other equipment, assists other city operations, and perform other duties as required, available for 24-hour emergency calls. Requirements include high school graduation, ability to obtain a CDL license issued by the State of Nebraska within one year of hire. Excellent benefits package is included. Employment is contingent upon successful completion of a post-offer physical and drug test. Applications can be picked up at the City of Benkelman Office located at 126 7th Ave E, Benkelman, NE 69021 or by calling 308-423-2540. The City of Benkelman is an EOE.

Journeyman Lineman. Village of Morrill (Population 934) is accepting applications for the position of full-time Electric Journeyman Line Worker with a pay range of \$22-\$30 per hour DOQ. This individual will perform skilled line work in the operation, construction, maintenance and repair of overhead and underground electric distribution and transmission systems. A Class B CDL with Airbrakes is required. Applications, with resumes, will be accepted until the position is filled. A complete job description for this position and an application is available at www.villageofmorrill.com or at the Village Office located at 118 S Center Avenue, Morrill, NE. This position includes an excellent benefit package including health

insurance, retirement, vacation, sick leave, and paid holidays.

Electric Distribution Superintendent. The City of Wayne is accepting applications for the position of Electric Distribution Superintendent. The Electric Distribution Superintendent supervises electrical distribution operations and maintenance work of overhead and underground electrical distribution systems and equipment for the City of Wayne. This position is responsible for accomplishing goals and objectives of the City by using independent discretion in utilization of personnel, equipment, and supplies within existing financial resources. This position directs and supervises the work of the electric line crew and provides oversight and field supervision of daily work and project management. *Qualifications:* Experience and extensive knowledge of the operations of an electrical distribution and transmission system. Must be able to interpret electrical distribution drawings, and electric building and safety codes. Must be able to work with customers, answer questions, and resolve problems. Five to 10 years of experience in a supervisory, management, or in a line Foreman position is preferred. An equivalent combination of experience and education may be considered. Excellent fringe benefits including Group Health, Accident Insurance, Life Insurance, retirement plan along with vacation and sick leave. Starting pay (\$74,422.40-\$96,657.60) will be based on prior experience and certifications. Application and job description are available at the City of Wayne, 306 Pearl Street, Wayne, NE 68787. Applications, along with cover letter and resume, will be



received until position is filled and should be returned to Betty McGuire, City Clerk, with applicable resume. First review of applications began Jan. 22, 2024. City of Wayne is an EOE. For more information, call 402-375-1733 and ask for Wes Blecke, City Administrator.

Utility Superintendent. The City of Bennet is now accepting applications for the position of Utility Superintendent. This position is responsible for directing, supervising, and/or performing all construction and maintenance of streets, sewers, water operations, parks, equipment, garbage site, and all other City facilities. Necessary skills include the ability to supervise others, maintain records, operate excavation equipment, and diagnosis equipment problems. Applicants must possess a strong work ethic and be proficient in multi-tasking, problem solving, crisis management, and customer relations. **REQUIRED:** Basic math skills, water, and wastewater certification, OR demonstrate the willingness and ability to complete the necessary certifications. This is a full-time position with benefits. Wages will be based on documented experience and proven skills. The application form and complete job description are available at the Bennet City Office, 685 Monroe Street. (402)782-3300 or email cityoffice@cityofbennet.com. EOE

2024 Training calendar

Visit our website at lonm.org/education-events/ for a complete list of workshops and conferences.

February

Feb. 26-27League Midwinter Conference Cornhusker Marriott Hotel, Lincoln

March

March 5 Water Operator Training Workshop City Hall, Chadron

March 6 Water Operator Training Workshop Fire Hall, Gering

March 7 Water Operator Training Workshop Mid-Plains Community College Facility, Ogallala

April

April 2 Water Operator Training Workshop Community Center, Wymore

Uniform Plumbing Code updated

Has your municipality adopted a plumbing code? If not, in Nebraska the default code may be the uniform plumbing code. The Uniform Plumbing Code (UPC) is published by the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials (IAPMO) which is updated every three years.

This organization develops a code to govern the installation and inspection of plumbing

systems as a way to promote public health, safety, and welfare. The last publication was the 2024 edition. More information on the updated plumbing code can be found at the IAPMO website at iapmo.org/publications in their publications section. A copy can be downloaded from this site.

Comparisons or differences between the UPC and the National

Plumbing Code can be found at the website uniformcodes.org as some of the state regulations may follow or refer to these (backflow/cross connections).

If your municipality references or adopts a plumbing code, someone at your system needs to check or review the most current changes. The updates may affect your municipal codes so be sure to stay current.

Do you need to get a water or wastewater operator certified?

Check the following websites for information on training and test dates:

Nebraska Water Environment Association nebwea.org

Nebraska Rural Water Association nerwa.org

Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy deq.state.ne.us

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Service Awards

Remember to recognize your employees' anniversary milestones. The League provides certificates for 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, and 65.

You can request them by emailing brendah@lonm.org.

Retirements: Let us help recognize those municipal employees who are retiring after years of service.