



Environment Association

Montana Water Newsletter

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Bill Stuffers

Have you ever wished that there was a simple, poignant, appealing way to communicate to your wastewater system users that flushing “flushable” wipes is detrimental to your operation? Or that grease in the sewer can have nasty effects that cost time and money to alleviate?

Would you like to raise awareness in your rate payers that their actions may have a direct influence on the rates they need to pay?

The Water Environment Federation (WEF) offers bill stuffers that convey these messages and are easy to distribute with the monthly water/sewer bill. These bill stuffers are not free but prices are reasonable – about \$10 for 100 of them. Check them out at www.wef.org and type “bill stuffers” in the search bar at the top right.

Bill Bahr (DEQ) Retired

Bill Bahr, Compliance and Technical Assistance Section of the Water Protection Bureau at DEQ, retired on August 19, 2016. Pete Boettcher is stepping into Bill’s position and is available to answer wastewater treatment questions. Pete has a wastewater background with 27 years of experience in wastewater treatment plants and 8 years as a compliance inspector for the DEQ. His email is pboettcher@mt.gov and his phone number is 406-444-6778 (no cell number).

LEAD IN FLINT WATER PROMPTS MONTANA UTILITIES TO BE PROACTIVE

The widely published drinking water crisis in Flint, Michigan, involving old water distribution piping, corrosive water, and resulting high levels of lead and other contaminants has many of us asking ourselves what the situation is like here in Montana. Lead service lines are not as prevalent in Montana communities as in some parts of the county; however, they do exist and it is good to know that some Montana utilities are well on the way to addressing lead service lines in their communities.

We have corresponded with John Alston, City of Bozeman Public Works Water and Sewer Superintendent, to find out how Bozeman is responding. The City of Bozeman is taking a proactive approach to eliminating potential risks associated with lead water service lines.

According to Mr. Alston, the city has about 170 lead service lines in the system. This is only a small percentage of the total number of service lines in the city but for those users connected to one, it is good news that the City is planning on replacing all of them from the water main in the street to the meter. The City of Bozeman owns the service lines from the main to the meter, so according to Mr. Alston ‘it was a fairly easy decision to make, and the city believes it’s the right thing to do.’

Most of the service line replacements will be done by putting a cable through the old pipe, and pulling it out while a new copper pipe is pulled into place. Some replacements will be made by boring, and some may need to be open cut; however, since many of the affected properties have mature trees, the city will try to minimize the surface disturbance and restoration work needed.

Letters were sent to home owners with a lead service line, and offered free water testing. If any of the test results are above the action limit, associated lead lines will get replaced immediately; otherwise, they will be put on the replacement schedule. The replacements are anticipated to take 3 years, and cost between \$800,000 and \$1 million dollars total.

BOZEMAN



IMAGINE A DAY WITHOUT WATER

Last year, the Value of Water Coalition and the US Water Alliance organized the first “Imagine a Day Without Water” event. The event served to get the word out and create awareness of the value of water. The vast majority of people in the US have grown up taking clean water for granted. It has always been there at the turn of a tap or the push of a toilet handle. And it has always dutifully disappeared down the drain without a second thought. It has been easy forgetting how essential water is for so many details in everyday life. The glass of water you have on your night table, the toilet flush, taking a shower, brushing teeth, coffee for breakfast, washing dishes, laundry, cooking, watering the lawn, and that does not cover the myriad of uses and water demands from agricultural, commercial and industrial enterprises that make the things we want to eat, drink, wear, drive, take to cure illnesses, enjoy, and so on. Water, clean water, is absolutely essential to our way of living, and in large quantities.

Recent events, such as the drinking water crisis in Flint, Michigan or droughts that leave reservoirs depleted with white mineral perimeter rings tens of feet high are drawing attention to the need to invest in water infrastructure and the need for water management to make sure the next two or three generations can go on forgetting about water. But that means that we - here and now - must take action.

And this action will need to come without many of the traditional avenues for financing, which results in many communities having to decide between no action or taking out loans to finance necessary improvements. The cost of these loans then must be passed on to the water and sewer users, the rate payers. In many, especially smaller communities, city councils find themselves in the uncomfortable position to vote on rate increases they know will burden their constituents with monthly water and sewer rates that may be anywhere from 50% to 150% higher than at any time in the past 50 years.

This is when public education and creating awareness of the value of water become so important. Most of us are willing to pay up to \$50/month for an internet connection, up to over \$100/month if you add in cable or dish TV. And that daily cup of coffee from the coffee shack can add up to \$70/month. Smartphone bills usually run at around \$40/month and with several household members, the bill can easily exceed \$100 per month. And so on. We value these things and are willing to pay for them because being without them creates inconveniences.

Now imagine to be without water – what sort of “inconvenience” would that create? It would not just be inconvenient to be without water, it would make life as we know it impossible. And this is what we must learn to value and be willing to invest in. This is what rate payers must come to see, so that the burden on city staff answering the phones after rate increases go into effect is a lighter one. Ideally, phone calls would sound something like this: “Thank you for improving our water/sewer system. I am glad to know that the city is proactive in making sure that our drinking water is safe and our wastewater is disposed of in a safe manner to protect water resources.” OK, this may sound rather unrealistic, but then again, is it really?

Join organizations all over the country in September for Imagine a Day Without Water. Organize an event in your town, include bill stuffers in August’s bill, place an article in the paper (you may shamelessly plagiarize this article), hang posters in prominent locations, talk to folks in the street and ask them what water, clean water, is worth to them. There are no limits to your creativity when it comes to raising awareness for the value of water.

Imagine a Day Without Water, September 15, 2016, <http://imagineadaywithoutwater.org>.



WHAT'S THE VALUE OF WATER?

When nature calls, you want open stalls.

Most of us never think about what happens to the water we flush. Luckily, we don't have to. Pumps, treatment plants, and pipes remove and clean wastewater so it can be returned to the environment or safely reused.

Clean water systems are one of the greatest public health achievements in history, but they're aging. They need investment to continue delivering life's most essential resource. All day, every day.

Water—Essential. Reliable. Invaluable.

Learn how water works for you. Visit TheValueofWater.org.

Your City/Town
Logo Here

#ValueWater

Value of Water
COALITION 

Presented in cooperation with the Value of Water coalition

Imagine a Day Without Water, September 15, 2016, <http://imagineadaywithoutwater.org/>.

WORKING TOGETHER TO PROTECT MONTANA'S WATER RESOURCES

7 Ways to Effectively Communicate the Safety of Your Drinking Water Supply

By Heather Syverson

Due to the intense media coverage of the Flint, Michigan water crisis this year, water utility managers across the country are fielding questions from customers and local media outlets about the safety of drinking water. The good news is that each community water system should already be equipped with the information customers are seeking, thanks to the Safe Drinking Water Act requirement to provide an annual Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) to the public.

The CCR, frequently called a Water Quality Report, summarizes results of the previous year's drinking water quality analyses, communicates information about the water supply system of interest to the customer, and conveys health impacts of drinking water. Assuming each water system has already made paper copies of the CCR available and/or posted a direct link to the entire report on the utility's website as required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), a reminder to customers that the information is always available to them is a prudent consideration.

Here are seven ways a community water system can make the most out of a CCR report:

1. **Newsletter article:** Use a monthly or quarterly newsletter to remind customers that they can access the utility's CCR in its entirety online and be sure to provide the web address. To go one step further, provide a summary of the CCR's findings for those who don't want to read the entire report. Also make paper copies available, if requested.
2. **Website article:** Even if the CCR is already posted on the utility's website, a brief article that includes the original link to the report can be posted in a prominent place on the website's home page.
3. **Utility bills:** Print a brief thank you to customers for entrusting the utility with providing their drinking water and include a link to the CCR.
4. **Be available to the media:** If contacted by a reporter, consider it an opportunity to promote the water system's successes and explain the treatment techniques that ensure public safety. If asked about violations that appear on the CCR, explain what was done to rectify the situation.
5. **News release:** Go directly to the media with information about local drinking water quality and include the link to the CCR report.
6. **Social media:** Posting a link to the CCR on Twitter and Facebook is a simple and free way to remind your followers that a utility is being transparent about water safety.
7. **Infographics:** Use infographics to illustrate your message. Infographics can be effective in so many places – website, newsletter, utility bills, news releases, and social media.

FREE Water Operator Training

A FREE 1-day workshop titled "Small System Operator Training to Achieve/Maintain Compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act" is being offered with funding provided by EPA and AWWA's partner, the Rural Community Assistance Partnership. This workshop is being facilitated by MSAWWA and METC and will take place on October 18, 2016 in Billings. The workshop is designed for operators, decision makers, engineers, and managers at all water and distribution systems in Montana including tribal and non-tribal small community water systems, non-transient non-community water systems, and transient non-community water systems.

Attendees will gain an understanding of existing and upcoming drinking water regulations such as the TCR, RTCR, Groundwater Rule, SWTR, Stage 2 DBPR, and LCR. They will also come away with knowledge on managing distribution system operations to prevent microbial or chemical contamination, being familiar with compliance monitoring schedules, methods, and other requirements, and an understanding of the importance of optimizing treatment plant operations in enhancing distribution system water quality.

For more information, please visit the MSAWWA-MWEA joint website at www.montanawater.org to download the flyer/registration form and agenda. Please feel free to pass this information on to pertinent parties that may benefit from this opportunity.



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Find us on our Joint Website at www.montanawater.org
Also browse the websites of our national parent organizations:
Water Environment Federation, www.wef.org and
American Water Works Association, www.awwa.org.

