

Utilities Section Newsletter

League of Nebraska Municipalities

July 2011

Reimbursement grant dollars are dwindling

Funds available for reimbursement of water operator training and licensing costs are now limited.

By Michael Wentink,
Field Services and Training,
Nebraska Dept. of Health
& Human Services

The availability of the grant funds in Nebraska for the past 10 years has been due to amendments that occurred to the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) in 1996. Those amendments directed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to develop guidelines specifying minimum standards for certification and recertification of operators of community and non-transient non-community public water systems. To lessen the burden of these minimum standards, Section 1419(d) of the SDWA requires USEPA to reimburse the costs of training and certification for persons operating community and non-transient non-community public water systems serving 3,300 persons or fewer that are required to undergo training pursuant to the operator certification final guidelines. The reimbursement is to be provided through grants to states.

The amount allocated to Ne-

braska was \$1,577,400. A grant work plan was developed and Nebraska was awarded its allotment from USEPA on June 14, 2002. The grant closeout date is Dec. 31, 2011. Reimbursable costs for eligible water operators include water operator training courses, continuing education, license renewal fees and mileage to and from those activities.

In order to maximize the amount available for renewal of eligible operator license fees, reimbursement of costs for eligible operators is now limited to the reimbursement of water operator license renewal fees. All water operator licenses will expire on Dec. 31, 2011 and there are an estimated 1,400 to 1,500 reimbursement grant eligible water operators that will be renewing licenses this year.

If you are the licensed water operator of a community or non-transient non-community public water system serving 3,300 persons or fewer, your water operator license renewal fee of \$115 is eligible to be paid by this grant. It is a simple process; no payment is required to be submitted with the renewal application. You will find the information required for this

process on the first page of the renewal application.

Since the remaining grant funds for this purpose are limited, use of the grant for payment of the license renewal fee will be on a first come, first served basis upon DHHS receipt of a complete renewal application. A complete application means an application with all required information provided, all questions answered, and the required amount of continuing education obtained.

So, obtain your needed continuing education by Oct. 1, 2011, and submit a complete application at renewal time to take advantage of this last opportunity for reimbursement of your renewal fee.

For more information or answers to questions on this, contact Michael Wentink at (308) 535-8135 or by email at mike.wentink@nebraska.gov.

If you would like to receive your *Utilities Section Newsletter* by email rather than regular mail, please contact Brenda at brendae@lonm.org.
Thank you!

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UTILITIES SECTION

Lash Chaffin
Utilities Section Director
Rob Pierce
Utilities Field Representative

Eight tips to working safely in the heat

As the days of summer set in, keep these safety tips in mind to avoid overstressing your body as you work in the heat:

- 1) Perform your heaviest tasks during the morning. If you have work that will require you to exert a lot of energy, it's best to do it in the cooler hours of the morning.
- 2) Build your tolerance. It usually takes a good two weeks for your body to acclimate itself to working in the heat, so give your body time to adjust to higher temps.
- 3) Use the buddy system. That way you can keep an eye out and get help if needed.
- 4) Drink water. Health experts say you should drink a small cup every 15 to 20 minutes when

you're working in the heat to stay hydrated and cool.

5) Take breaks. Give your body a chance to cool down by heading off to a cool area for a few minutes.

6) Eat lightly. Try not to eat heavy or big meals before you have to work in the heat.

7) Skip the caffeine. It makes the body lose water and increases your chances of heat illness.

8) Watch your medications. If you take any medicine, you should check with your doctor or pharmacist about its effects when you're working in the heat.

~ adapted from the U.S. Dept. of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration Web site

Street Lighting Workshop held

The first of two Street Lighting Workshops was held July 26 at the Howard Johnson Riverside Inn in Grand Island.

Topics included lighting history, regulations, fixture components, lighting types, troubleshooting, current technologies, photocells, pole options and project management when designing lighting layouts. Street lighting has changed over the years from torches to gas lights to arc lamps to mercury vapor to high pressure sodium metal halide and now to light emitting diodes (LED).

These workshops are just one way to help provide information to users in order to make sound decisions when taking the step to upgrade their system.

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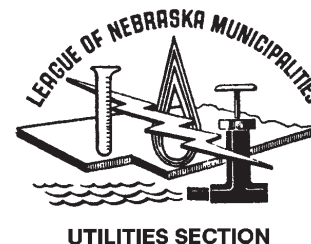
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Nebraska utilities history

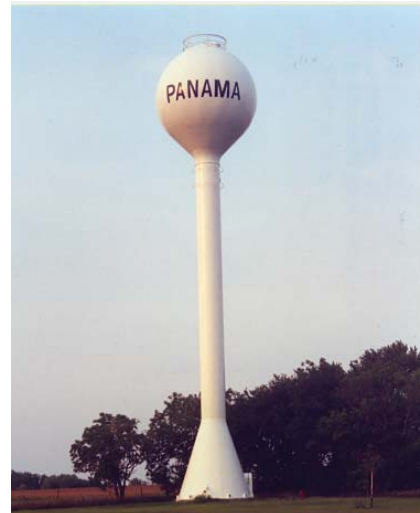
The Utilities Section Newsletter will continue to feature histories of both utilities and associate members. Any historical data and/or photos of your utilities, a specific facility, or articles already written are welcome, along with permission to print. If you have questions, contact Rob at 402-476-2829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

*By Rob Pierce,
Utilities Field Representative,
LNM*

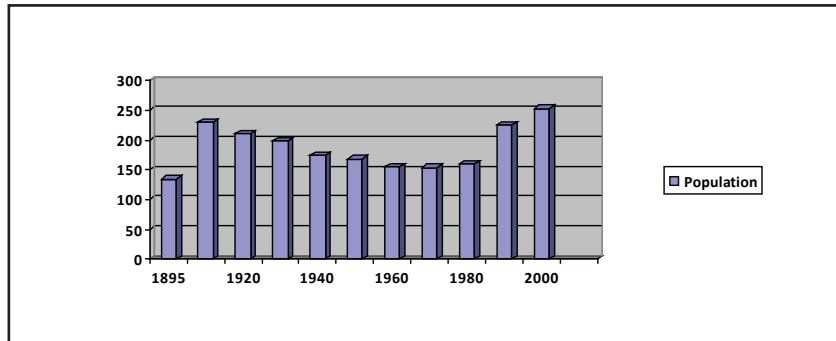
Panama, located in Lancaster County, had a post office established in the area Dec. 20, 1869. The Panama Cemetery Association was established and the cemetery was divided into lots June 29, 1878. In 1880, the First United Brethren Church was formed. By 1888, the community was surveyed and platted with land deeded to the future town. In

1888, the Missouri Pacific Railroad (MoPac) passed through, and a station was established. Also about 1888, a municipal electric system was established. A school was built in 1889, and in 1891, the Bank of Panama was organized. By 1892, the *Panama Patriot* newspaper was first published, and the population was 135 by 1895. The grain elevators were built about 1897, and by 1899, the community had dirt streets with crosswalks.

In 1900, the population was



Panama Water Storage Tower, 2000 Photo.



about 200, and in 1904, Panama was incorporated as a village. On July 29, the first by-laws and ordinances were signed. In 1903, cemetery lots were selling at \$2 per lot.

In 1905, a two-story school was
Continued on page 4

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Nebraska utilities history

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built, which was destroyed by fire in 1927 and replaced with a larger brick school building in 1928. In 1909, the *Panama Patriot* newspaper became the *Panama News*, and that same year, the Convivial Culture Club was organized. A hand dug brick-lined well was located at 2nd & Locust Streets, complete with a hand pumper. A second town well was placed on the north side of the Dickson & Steeves Merchandise Store.

The population by 1910 was at 230, and by 1917, a Farmers State Bank was chartered. In the summer of 1918, a Ford garage was built, and in 1921, an election was held to purchase a municipal light plant at a cost of about \$6,500. The Panama Electric Light Company was owned jointly by the village and some individuals.

By 1930, the population had dropped to 198, and in 1931, the *Lancaster Record* newspaper was

being published.

In the early 1940s, an offer was made to the council for each home to have access to natural gas, but was not installed due to lack of support. In the early 1950s, the electrical system was supplied by Nebraska City Utilities. In 1960, the population still lingered at about 153, and the fire department consisted of 23 volunteer firemen. That year, the electrical system and 60 meters

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Nebraska utilities history

Continued from page 4
in service were owned by the village and operated/supplied by Nebraska City Utilities at the KW wholesale of \$0.0175. The minimum rate was \$1.50 for 15 kilowatt hour and the cost of street light operation was \$20 per month. The water plant and 60 meters in service were owned by the village with a meter deposit of \$25 and rates at \$1 per 1,000 gallons. By 1962, a sewer system project was underway and water rates were \$2 per 2,000 gallons

(gals.) and \$1 per 1,000 gallons thereafter. In 1964, the school consolidated with other districts to form the Norris Public Schools (District 160). Also that year, the open sewer ditches were replaced by 11,000 feet of pipe and a sewage lagoon disposal system was installed at a cost of \$36,000.

In 1973, Panama was one of 201 communities in Nebraska to participate in the Nebraska Community Improvement Program. In 1974, the Main Street was paved and curbed and in the late 1970s,

lights were added to the baseball field.

In the 1980s, the population increased and modern rest rooms were installed in the park. In the 1990s, the wastewater treatment system made improvements, and a new 100,000-gallon water storage tower was installed in 1998-99. Today, Panama has curbsless, hard-surfaced streets, propane gas service, electricity provided by Norris Public Power District, a facultative controlled discharge

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1961 ANNIVERSARY 2011



Who has the best tasting water in Nebraska?

Bring your water to the annual Nebraska Section American Water Works Association (NS-AWWA) Conference to be held Nov. 2-4, 2011 at the Holiday Inn in Kearney.

The NS-AWWA is once again hosting the “water taste test” event. A panel of expert water tasters has been assembled to judge the event to determine who has the best tasting water in Nebraska for 2011.

The Nebraska Section AWWA winner will be nominated to com-

pete in the National AWWA Water



Taste Test at the National AWWA Conference if the winner meets the National AWWA eligibility requirements. Past Nebraska winners in this event have been Lincoln (2009) and Fremont (2010) water systems. The national competition began in 2004 with the Nebraska section first competing in 2009.

Are you short a couple hours of recertification credit toward your water license?

Itron is sponsoring a “Lunch-n-Learn” session covering topics such as ChoiceConnect Fixed Network, Water Loss Management Tools and Itron Water Meter product line. This event will be held Sept. 7, 2011 from 10 am - 2 pm at the Embassy Suites, 1040 P Street in Lincoln.

This event is a great opportunity to engage with an Itron team that specializes in the water market. Learn how Itron’s products and solutions can help improve your operational efficiencies, monitor system integrity and improve service to your customers.

This exclusive opportunity to ask Itron about its products is made possible in part by Utility Solutions Associates. The Nebraska Department of Health & Humans Services will allow participants to receive 2.5 contact hours for attending.

Nebraska utilities history

Continued from page 5

lagoon wastewater treatment system, a public water system contracted with Lancaster County Rural Water District #1 to supply water, and has three parks. Panama has been an incorporated village for 107 years.

References: Nebraska Directory of Municipal Officials, 1960-2010; Water Resources

of Nebraska, December 1936 Public Power Magazine, Vol. 51, Number 1, January-February 1993; Nebraska Our Towns... East Southeast, 1992; A Centennial History of Panama, Nebraska, 1888-1988; Maps Tell Nebraska’s History, 1991; Nebraska Municipal Review Magazine, 1934; and the NEDED website, 2005.

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Safety Workshop held

A Safety Workshop was held July 12 at the Gering Fire Hall, sponsored by the AWWA safety committee, League of Nebraska Municipalities Utilities Section and the League Association of Risk Management. The morning topics included basic work zone procedures, practices and safety. The work zone PowerPoint was followed by a hands-on session using training boards supplied by Nebraska LTAP. Bob Perry of LARM provided the instruction for the morning, which included proper flagging practices. Sample signage posters and handout materials were available to the participants. The afternoon covered a refresher on safe chemical handling and electrical safety, including arc flash and burn first aid.

Water and wastewater operators received 5 contact hours toward re-certification for each license. Electric and gas workers also

received certificates of attendance (five hours) toward their operator qualification and annual train-

ing. Another Safety Workshop is scheduled for Oct. 27, 2011, at the Holiday Inn in Lincoln.

Water Operator Training Workshops held

Water workshops were held in Lexington (Glenn Hawks Service Bldg.) July 6 and North Platte (Mid-Plains Community College) July 7. These workshops were sponsored by the Utilities Section and the Nebraska Section of the American Water Works Association.

Topics included asset management, energy efficiency, water loss prevention/practices, main break basics, along a regulatory and current water issues update. Participants received five hours

toward water operator grades 1-4 recertification and wastewater operators received 3.5 hours toward their license recertification.

Watch for workshops in your area, which can be found in this newsletter, training calendar, mailings and several websites.

Also, all water operator licenses come due at the end of this year. Check to be sure you have enough hours of attendance, proof of attendance (certificates) and any other related info required to submit to the state for renewal.

Reminder

Effective July 1, 2011, the mileage rate at which elected and appointed officials, employees, or volunteers may be reimbursed was increased to 55.5 cents per miles.

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Training calendar for 2011

September

- Sept. 6Backflow Workshop Fire Hall, Ogallala
- Sept. 15Urban Forestry Management Course Fire Hall, Gering
- Sept. 20Backflow Workshop Howard Johnson Riverside Inn,
Grand Island
- Sept. 21Backflow Workshop Fire Hall, Wayne
- Sept. 22Backflow Workshop BPW Building, Beatrice

October

- Oct. 4Water Operator Training Workshop Fire Hall, St. Paul
- Oct. 5Water Operator Training Workshop Library, David City
- Oct. 6Water Operator Training Workshop Fire Training Center, Norfolk
- Oct. 11Urban Forestry Management Course Howard Johnson, Grand Island
- Oct. 25-27Power Generation Conference (Diesel Conf.) Downtown Holiday Inn, Lincoln
- Oct. 27Safety Workshop Downtown Holiday Inn, Lincoln

November


- Nov. 29Water Operator Training Workshop Community Center, Bridgeport

December

- Dec. 1Water Operator Training Workshop Wally's, Fairbury
- Dec. 13Water Operator Training Workshop Fire Hall, South Sioux City
- Dec. 14Water Operator Training Workshop Christensen Field, Fremont
- Dec. 15Water Operator Training Workshop Lincoln Water System, Lincoln

Workshops also are listed on our website at www.lonm.org "Calendar of Events."

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