

Utilities Section Newsletter

League of Nebraska Municipalities

November 2021

Water taste testing competition winner

*By Rob Pierce, LNM Field Rep./
Training Coordinator*

At the Nebraska Section of the American Water Works Association (NS-AWWA) Annual Banquet Nov. 3, the **Metropolitan Utilities District (MUD)** Platte South Treatment Plant's water was declared the winner of the NS-AWWA's annual water-tasting competition. MUD dethroned the City of North Platte, who had won the past three years. North Platte was voted the runner-up.

Eight water samples were submitted from **Auburn, Aurora,**

Fremont, Lincoln, Mead, MUD, North Platte and Wahoo.

A panel of six judges graded the samples on appearance, scent, taste and aftertaste. The judges included: Andrea Hay, AWWA Public Affairs Council, Director of Communications Green Bay Water Utility; Casey Kendall, Superintendent, Village of Sutherland; Teresa Konda, Nebraska Section AWWA Director, HDR Water/Wastewater, Engineer; Keith Kontor, Water/Wastewater Superintendent, City of Fremont; Logan Morgaridge, NDEE Drinking Water Program, Environmen-



Adobe Stock photo.

tal Specialist; and Justin Novak, Project Manager, Papio-Missouri River NRD.

Congratulations to MUD South Platte Treatment plant and the North Platte Water Department!

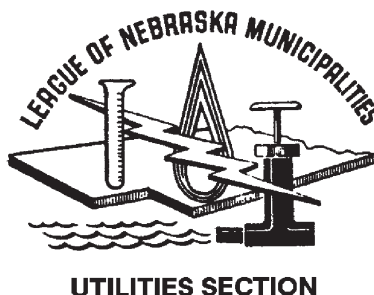
Mark your calendars!

The **2022 Utilities/Public Works Section Annual Conference** is scheduled for **Jan. 12-14** at the Embassy Suites in Lincoln.

The **2022 Snowball Wastewater Conference** is scheduled for **Jan. 26 and 27** at the Holiday Inn in Kearney.

[Click here](#) to register online.

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Lash Chaffin
Utilities Section Director
Rob Pierce
Utilities Field Representative

Nebraska Breaktime Trivia “Just For Fun”

Q-1. What city/village in Nebraska was originally called Collinsville?

Q-2. What Nebraska city/village/town in the 1860 census had the highest population?

Q-3. What city in Nebraska was

originally called Burnett?

Do you know where?

Q-4. In what Nebraska Utilities Section member city is this water treatment facility located?

Answers on page 14.



Writing an article for the Utilities Section Newsletter

Are you interested in writing an article for the *Utilities Section Newsletter*? We are interested in articles on the past, present, and future of your municipal utilities.

Articles can be written on a specific department or an overview of the history of the entire utilities department. Items of interest may be information on the first well in your community, number of services, service fees, the equipment

used, and also the employees that worked in the various utilities departments. Photos would enhance the articles and will be returned unless otherwise instructed.

When writing an article, just answer the simple who, what, when, where, why and how questions. Some examples are:

- *When did the utility begin offering service?*
- *Who were the employees?*

- *Why was the utility/department started?*
- *Where is the facility, office, warehouse or utility located?*
- *What service does the utility offer to the public?*
- *How does the utility or department operate?*

These are just some of the questions to be answered in order to write an article highlighting your utility's past, present and future.

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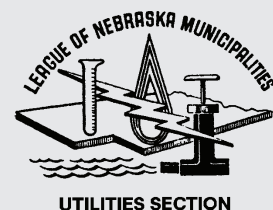
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Congratulations! Incorporation Anniversary Recognition: 85 years – Anoka (1936-village); 135 years – Holstein (village); 140 years – **Brock** (1881-village); and **Stanton** (1881-village/city).

For 85 years, the city of **Stromsburg** has owned and operated the electric system (1936).

At the NS-AWWA Annual Conference Banquet, Chad Roberts of **Norfolk** received the “Fuller Award” and John Keith of **Lincoln Water** received the “Volunteer of the Year” Award.

At the NWEA Annual Conference Banquet, Aaron Dressel of **Lincoln Wastewater** received the “William D. Hatfield” Award for outstanding performance and

professionalism in the operating of a wastewater treatment facility. Roger Protzman of JEO received the Sydney Bedell Award for extraordinary personal service to the Nebraska Water Environment Association. Roger has been a NWEA member for 23 years and **JEO** is an associate member of the Utilities Section. Congratulations!

Congratulations to the village of **Deshler** for being recognized by the Department of Economic Development as the newest member of the Nebraska Leadership Certified Community (LCC) program. Deshler is the 31st Nebraska community to qualify under the LLC program since it was created



in 2011.

Utilities Section members and associate members are bolded.

Do you, your department or facility have something to crow about? Received an award, had an article written highlighting an event or person? Do you have a project worthy of acknowledgment in the Utilities Section Newsletter? If so, please send your information to us so we can share your excitement with other members.

In 1931, the world was in the early years of the Great Depression. The average price of a new car was \$640 and the average price of gas was 10 cents. In 1931, on Nov. 8, the **Utilities Section** was formed and a vote was taken to approve the bylaws at the Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln. Congratulations to the Utilities Section on its 90th Year Anniversary!

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Nebraska utilities history – Columbus

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, LNM Field Rep./
Training Coordinator*

Columbus is located in Platte County and by December 1855, a flour mill had been erected. By May 1856, the Columbus Town Company had begun to establish a settlement. In July, a town site was surveyed and the community was named for Columbus, Ohio. A post office was established in 1856 and another survey was made in August. Just west of the Columbus site was the Elkhorn and Loup Fork Bridge with Ferry Company headed by James C. Mitchell who had laid out the townsite of Pawnee. The two companies consolidated in 1856 and by 1857, a saw and grist mill had been established and a hotel was erected in August by the Town Company for \$5,000. The population by 1858 was 16 and a petition to incorporate was made in March. By May, a permanent town had been founded with a ferry operating on the Loup River and the first stage began running

from Columbus to Fort Kearney tri-weekly (directly to the fort). One source noted that Columbus was incorporated as a village Oct. 2, 1858, and another source noted that on Oct. 8, 1858, a bill to incorporate Columbus was in the fifth legislative session, then read a second time Oct. 9.

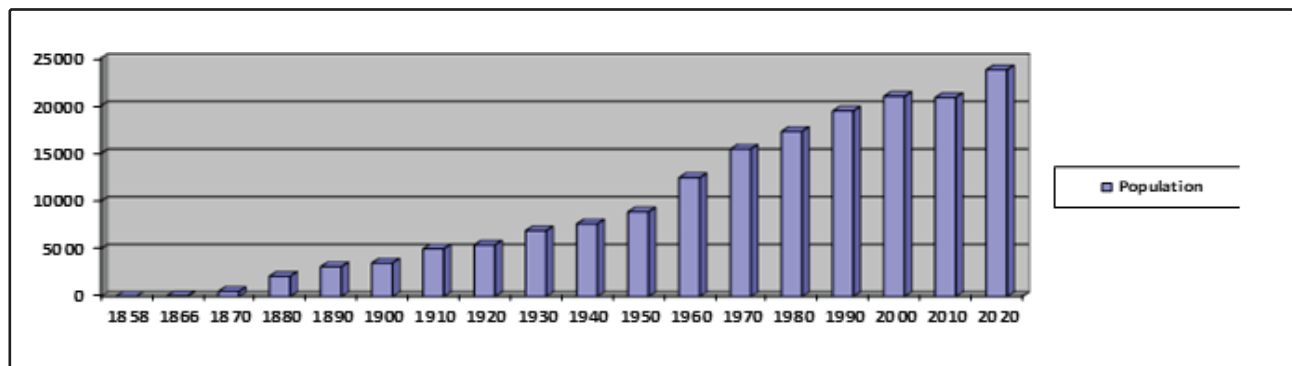
In 1860, the Union Pacific Railroad arrived and in the spring, a new town hall was built. The first school started with 66 pupils with sessions held in old Company House until the fall of 1861 when a new frame school was built on Eighth Street. The Columbus Cemetery Association was organized Feb. 2, 1865 and on Feb. 11, Columbus was incorporated as a village by the Nebraska Territorial Legislature. The Hammond House Hotel was built in 1868 and by June, the population was 75. In 1868, the Columbus Elevator was built along with a new (30 feet by 50 feet) school for \$4,000. The grist mill was operating and a courthouse was being built. On Feb. 15, 1869, Columbus



Columbus water tower. 2010 photo.

was incorporated as a city of the second class and the Union Pacific Elevator and the Catholic Church were built. By 1870, the population increased to 526, a bridge was erected over the Platte River and on May 11, the *Platte Journal* newspaper began publishing. In July 1871, the Columbus State Bank was opened and in 1872, a

Continued on page 5



Nebraska utilities history – Columbus

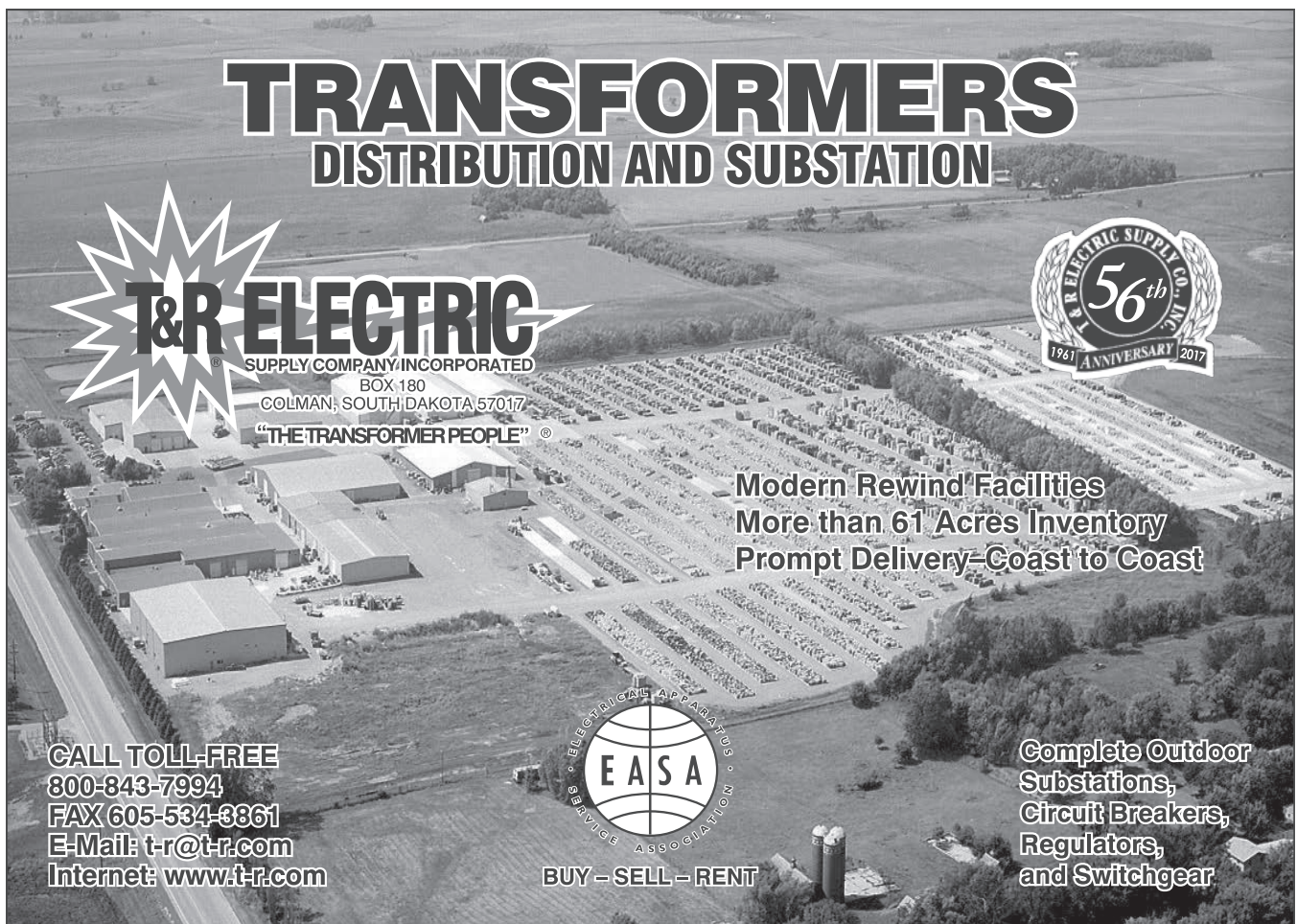
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two-story brick city hall building was erected in the park for \$2,000. The fire equipment was housed on the first floor of the city hall building (1872) and by January 1873, the Pioneer Hook & Ladder Co. No.1 was initiated. In May/June, a hook and ladder truck was purchased for \$1,800. By Aug. 22, 1873, the inhabitants created the Columbus Engine Company No. 1, with a new \$2,000 engine arriving. In 1874, both fire companies were housed in the fire hall built

by the city for \$2,000. There were 18 members in the Hook & Ladder Company and 40 members in the Engine Company. The Engine Company No. 1 later become Hose Company Number 1 and Hose Company Number 2 with 47 firefighters, a hose cart and 1,000 feet of hose. A stage line in 1874 ran from Norfolk to Madison, Wisner, O'Neill, Niobrara and then Columbus. The Columbus State Bank opened Aug. 1, 1875 and the Columbus Foundry was


established. The Butcher Saloon was built in 1876 and in 1877, the Library Committee established a Public Library. One source noted that Columbus was incorporated as a city of the second class Aug. 18, 1873, but a legality was questioned in 1877 and a law was passed bridging the trouble for the measure, which was passed by a special act of the Legislature Feb. 7, 1877. The Opera House was built in 1878 and by 1879,

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Nebraska utilities history – Columbus

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the Grand Pacific Hotel was built. The Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad ran a branch line from Lincoln to Columbus. In the fall of 1879, the first high school was built and in December, discussions were held to use waterpower of the Loup River. G. A. (Gus) Schroeder and his associates installed arc brush and an incandescent electric system in the mill, which had a capacity of 1,200 candle power. Having more power than he needed in the mill, the Columbus Milling Company began providing power for electric lights as several street corner arc lights were installed in the city.

By 1880, the population increased to 2,131, the Union Pacific Railroad had tracks laid to town and the Columbus Brewery was built. By 1881, the Columbus Packing House was built, the *Columbus Journal* newspaper was being published and the Columbus Creamery was organized. By January 1882, the Columbus Engine Co. #1 had 28 members, a hose cart with 1,000 feet of hose and a \$2,000 fire house, which had been erected in Frankfort Square. The

Columbus Mill (1855) had a 55 horsepower (HP) engine and coal bins with plans to build a stand-pipe. The Columbus Water Works and Light Company was organized in 1885 and a cistern was located on the intersection of 13th Street and Nebraska Avenue. An ag implement business occupied the lot in 1885, which was later occupied by the light plant with a foundry just to the south. On Dec. 23, 1885, current for electric lights was turned on marking the beginning of the electric light system in Columbus. The population by 1885 was estimated at 2,750 and some businesses in operation included the Columbus Packing Company, a sale barn, a broom factory, a grocery, a butter/egg business, a livery, a harness shop, a foundry, a roller mill, the Central Hotel, the Grand Pacific Hotel and an Opera House. The Columbus Star Brewery located on 7th & D Streets had a capacity of 3,000 barrels, an office, a malt house, a well, an icehouse, storage and a malt kiln. More railroad tracks were laid to Columbus in June 1886 and about this time, the Franciscan Sisters sought to incor-

porate what was to be designated as the East End Sewer Company. A waterworks was established in 1886 with \$20,000 in bonds. On April 17, the Harris Company of Chicago bought the bonds (\$20,350) and began construction of a group of circular wells (20 feet in diameter and ranging from 36-40 feet in depth). The wells were constructed and coupled together in one large center chamber then by a 12-inch suction pipe; these wells were then connected to the pumps. Several blocks of mains were laid in August as pumps and a boiler were installed in the brick powerhouse building. Power later was obtained from the Columbus Light, Heat and Power Company as well water was fed to a 110-foot steel tower (standpipe). On Dec. 17, 1886, the system was evaluated with a fire hose attached to a fire hydrant to check pressure, which proved satisfactory. By May 1887, two businessmen (Jaeggi & Schupbach) installed a plant capable of supplying 500 incandescent lights, offering electric lights to customers. The W. Y. Bissel Hose Company was

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Nebraska utilities history – Columbus

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formed July 2, 1887, and by 1889, the original fire department had 90 volunteer firefighters, three hand hose carts, 1,000 feet of hose, one hook/ladder truck and two alarm bells. In 1888, areas of the Loup River were surveyed to determine where the best site for maximum waterpower could be found. On Nov. 1, 1888, bonds of \$10,000 at 6 percent interest were approved for the waterworks. By November 1889, the waterworks consisted of a Holly waterworks system, with 16 driven wells, a vertical iron 100-foot standpipe, a pumphouse with two Smith Vaile duplex pumps (1 million-gallon capacity each), which was located south of 11th Street. The system had seven-and-three-quarter miles of four-, six- and eight-inch water pipes, 42 fire hydrants with an average daily consumption of 75,000 gallons in the winter and 150,000 gallons in the summer. The city waterworks pumphouse, located south of the flour mill, had two Dynamos with 50- and 60-HP engines. The waterworks north of Q or Quincy Street and east of 11th Street had a 141,000-gallon (100 feet x 12 feet) iron standpipe. The Columbus Electric Light Company, located south of the Columbus Roller Mills & Elevator, had a capacity of 30 arc and 300 incandescent lights in November 1889. The coal-fueled steam system had a 50-HP engine with two Dynamos, a 50-HP engine with a Dynamo and a 60-foot chimney.

The population increased to 3,134 by 1890 and some businesses operating included a brickyard, a lumberyard and a soda/mineral water factory. The city hall was

moved to the basement of the Commercial Bank Building in 1892.

On July 1, 1891, the Columbus Sewerage and Drainage Company was incorporated with \$5,000 capital stock. In August, an ordinance was passed to provide sewerage for Columbus. By December, the first part of the building of the sanitary sewers was completed by the Columbus Sewerage and Drainage Company.

In 1892, the Columbus East End Sewer Company was established for its Franciscan community by three sisters from St. Mary's Hospital (officially registered on March 8, 1899). The Columbus Canal and Power Company was organized in 1893 and by 1894, the Columbus Power & Irrigation Company was organized. The Platte and Colfax County Irrigation and Canal Company was formed in 1896 and in February 1898, the West End Sewer Company was incorporated to furnish sanitary sewerage for the western part of the city. In the 1890s, Dr. Alphonse Heintz D.V.M. took possession of the mill electric equipment and started an electric plant in a frame building between 22nd and 23rd Avenues on the north side of 11th Street. For years, this plant supplied both city and private consumers with lighting. Dusell & Fauble of Columbus completed the four to five miles of six- to 10-inch sewer pipe in the spring of 1899, later serving 200 customers. The fire department in 1899 had 65 volunteer firefighters, three hand hose carts, 1,800 feet of good two-and-one-half inch hose, one hook/ladder truck and two alarm bells. The city streets

were level, but unpaved at this time.

By 1900 the population was 3,522, and city hall meetings were held on the second story of the Opera Hall Building (1901). By the summer of 1902, the Independent Telephone Company was organized with a building constructed in 1903. A brickyard was built and a marble works was organized in 1905. Application #709 was made by the Nebraska Power Company for 2,700 second feet of water from the Loup River with an intake south of Genoa and returned near Columbus. On Feb. 25, 1908, the Columbus Light, Heat and Power Company was established/incorporated for \$150,000 of stock by William A. Ross, John T. Burke and John Parrish, who took over the Alphonse Heintz Electric Plant. In May 1906, an ordinance was presented to construct a gas plant and on May 2, 1907, a franchise was granted to the Columbus Gas Company to build a gas plant. Columbus Gas Company sold 500 shares for \$100 each to finance the plant. The American Construction Company of Newton, Iowa constructed the brick plant located at 11th & 12th Streets (near the railroad, east of 21st Avenue) along with laying gas mains. The carbonated water gas plant was installed using Tenny-High pressure machinery. The Nebraska Power Company built a 50,000-HP brick power plant on the Loup River (south side of town) for \$4 million with modern machinery to be installed. A secondary 50,000-HP plant was to be built at Schuyler at a cost of \$3 million.

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Nebraska utilities history – Columbus

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In 1910, the population was 5,014 and businessmen were discussing the need for paved roads. On July 1, 1910, an election was held to extend the waterworks with \$10,000 of bonds authorized to be sold. By October 1913, work began on the \$17,000 of waterworks extensions. By 1915, the municipal water system consisted of wells pumped direct and to a 12-foot by 100-foot steel stand-pipe (100,000 gals.), nine miles of cast iron mains four- to 10-inch, 42 hydrants, 500 meters and 500

services (galvanized pipe). Pressure for domestic at forty and for fire one hundred pounds per square inch (psi) with a daily consumption of 200,000 gallons per day (gpd). In 1911, the Nebraska Power Company secured the water rights for a canal. On Nov. 5, 1912, Application No. 1187 was filed to allow the Commonwealth Power Company use of approximately 2,000 second feet from the Loup River. The diversion was to be made below the return of the tall water from application N. 709 located near Columbus

and then returned to the Platte River near Schuyler where the plant will be located. The project was announced, but when World War I broke out, the project was shelved.

On March 27, 1912, the Columbus Sewerage and Drainage Company increased its capital stock from \$5,000 to \$10,000. On Aug. 5, 1914, the city began constructing a system of storm sewers (\$34,500 bond). Some 266 lineal feet of double rectangular concrete sewer line (three feet,

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eight inches by four feet each) and 3,400 lineal feet of reinforced concrete sewer main (seven feet, four inches by 4 feet) and 364 feet of two-ring brick sewer 64-inches, along with 10-inch outlet sewer pipe and 16 manholes, 16 catch basins (12 blocks or about 3/4 mile of sewer), outlet to the Loup River was to be completed in spring 1915. On June 9, 1914, a paving ordinance, using \$30,000 in bonds to pave streets, was approved and 29 blocks were paved. In 1915, business district streets were paved with two blocks of batholithic paving completed (being the first paving of streets with that process in the state). The Columbus Gas Company Coke & Oil Process was located south of the railroad tracks on Kummer Street (1914). The fire department in 1915 had 74 volunteer firefighters, one auto combination chemical/hose wagon, two chemical extinguishers, one hook and ladder truck, three hose carts with 2,800 feet cotton/rubber lined hose and an alarm bell. An election held in 1917 approved the proposal to grant the Columbus Light, Heat & Power Company a franchise for lighting.

By 1920, the population was 5,410, construction was underway on the Platte County Courthouse (completed in 1922) and a brick city waterworks was erected in 1922. By January 1925, the last mule-drawn delivery system was replaced by motor trucks and the major streets had been paved. The city had a 200-acre Pawnee Park and in 1926, the Wayside Country Club was organized. Northwestern Public Service purchased the

electric power plant in 1923 with headquarters at 1260 26th Avenue. From 1923-1925, the Northwestern Public Service Company operated the electric system until Middle West purchased the Northwestern Public Service Company in 1925. On June 1, 1927, the Northwestern Public Service Company filed an application and was granted to construct an electric transmission line from Columbus to Platte Center and Monroe. The Van Berg Golf Course was built in 1928. Also in 1928, Columbus was a member of the League of Nebraska Municipalities.

The population by 1930 was 6,898, the Platte River bridge was replaced (1930-31) and a municipal swimming pool opened. The Meridian viaduct had been completed (1931) and the Columbus State Bank closed. The city outgrew the gas manufacturing plant and soon began piping gas via a transmission pipeline. By 1932, the natural gas system was taken over by the Central West Public Service Company (a Delaware Corp.). Discussions were revived in 1932 on a project that was dropped in 1914 of developing hydropower on the Loup River in the Monroe/Columbus areas. Approximately \$11,000 was raised via mostly Columbus businessmen and on June 3, 1933, the Loup Public Power District was formed. On Nov. 15, 1933, the WPA allocated a grant for \$7.3 million and the first bonds were purchased June 28, 1934, with construction starting a few days later. Construction began on the diversion structure, 35-mile canal and powerhouse in 1934

and was completed September 1938. Water rates in 1933 were \$2.40 per 12,000 gallons minimum per quarter, \$0.20 per 1,000 gallons up to 50,000 gallons, next 50,000 gallons at \$0.15 and \$0.10 per 1,000 gallons over 100,000 gallons. By 1935, the city had five parks (one block each), with a swimming pool, ball field and playground equipment. In April 1935, the Roseland Cemetery was established. In 1934, a PWA sanitary sewer project for \$75,000 was advertising bids and a sewer project was underway by 1935. The electric distribution system was supplied by Northwest Public Service Company with 2,600 kilowatts from a steam power plant. On March 5, 1937, the first power was generated from the 42,000-kW hydroelectric power plant. On Aug. 6, the first transmission of Loup power flowed from Monroe to the Columbus powerhouse. On Sept. 25, 1939, Columbus voters approved a franchise to the Northwestern Public Service Company. The franchise was to be operative only upon its transfer to the newly created Consumers Public Power District. Negotiations included a lease-purchase agreement for Consumers Public Power District to purchase the system from Northwestern Public Service Company. The Consumers Public Power provided retail power to Columbus and wholesale to the Elkhorn Valley Power Company, Duncan and Richland. By Oct. 15, 1939, the Consumers Public Power District acquired the Northwestern Public Service Company properties.

By 1940, the population was
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7,632, the Agricultural Park (Parimutuel Horse Racing begun), the Platte County Agricultural Society was formed June 3, 1941, and the electric distribution system was served by Consumers Public. Behlen Manufacturing built a factory in 1946 on land which was to be an aluminum extrusion plant during WWII. However, the war ended before a factory was built. The population increased from 8,884 in 1950 to 12,476 in 1960 and the Elks Country Club Golf Course was designed and built in 1965 by Dick Phelps. By 1966, electric rates were a minimum of \$1 for 16 kWh, 100 kWh at \$3.95, 250 kWh at \$7.10, 500 kWh at \$9.58, 750 kWh at \$13.68, and 1,000 kWh at \$18.43. The electrical system was owned by Consumers Public Power District until 1968 when the Loup Public Power District took over. In 1969, improvements were made to the wastewater treatment plant and Platte College was formed.

The population by 1970 was 15,471 and in 1976, the city purchased two former NPPD buildings on the north corners of 25th Avenue and 14th Street. A new 30,000-square-foot library was opened in 1977 in a former Nebraska Public Power District building purchased for \$340,000. From 1980-1990, the population increased from 17,328 to 19,472 and the wastewater treatment facility expanded in 1989. On April 25, 1992, the “Quincentenary Bell” tower was dedicated and the city joined the Northeast Nebraska Waste Coalition. In November 1992, the ADM/Minnesota Corn Processors (Ethanol

Plant) started production. The natural gas system was operated by Minnegasco (Cengas) and supplied by Northern Natural Gas in 1982 and by 1994, was operated by Peoples Natural Gas and supplied by Northern Natural Gas. The municipally owned electrical distribution system was operated by Loup Public Power District and supplied by Nebraska Public Power District. The city was operating a conventional activated sludge system designed for 2.6 million gallons per day (mgd), with aerobic digester sludge treatment in 1999.

By 2000, the population was 20,998 and a new Hydropillar water storage tower was erected in 2002. The fire department in 2004 had 12 full-time and 65 on-call volunteers, 29 trained as EMTs, and two private ambulance services. The rural fire department had 20 volunteer firefighters with two fire stations and by 2008, an insurance class rating of 5/9. The grand opening of the new addition to the wastewater plant was in 2005 and the natural gas system was operated by Aquila and supplied by Northern Natural Gas. The \$33 million Columbus Community Hospital facility opened in 2006 and in May, the \$6.5-million Pawnee Plunge Water Park opened. The city had three golf courses (Country Shadows Golf Course, Quail Run and Van Berg Park) and maintained 14 parks, ice skating, swimming pool, wading pool, 18 lighted tennis courts, and lighted baseball/softball complexes. By 2008, the natural gas system was operated by Black Hills Energy Corp. (purchased from Aquila) and supplied by Northern Natural

Gas.

The population in 2010 was 22,111 and the razing of the old waterworks building south of the tracks was underway.

The city water distribution system was served by more than 125 miles of water mains (four- to 30-inches), approximately 9,000 metered service connections, about 80 water sample sites along with 12 production wells, two pump stations and four water storage facilities. By March 2013, a new transfer station building was operating and collection was provided by private companies and then hauled to the Columbus Transfer Station and then to the Clarkson Landfill. The city operated and maintained a sanitary sewer system, which included more than 185 miles of sanitary sewer mains, 20 sewer lift stations and over 1,500 manholes. In 2018, an overpass was being constructed over the railroad tracks at 3rd Street. The new Columbus Fire Hall/Police Station was being constructed (2019), the \$16 million project was located on land just north of Howard Boulevard and U.S. Hwy 81 between 46th and 47th Avenues.

Today, Columbus has a population of 23,792 and is a member of the League of Nebraska Municipalities and Utilities Section.

References: Nebraska Directory of Municipal Officials, 1956, 1958, 1960, 1962, 1965-75, 1977-87, 1990-2020; Nebraska Municipal Review Magazine, 1925, 1928, 1934, 1967; Lincoln Journal Star Newspaper, 2003, 2010; Pages of History, Nebraska High Schools, Past & Present,

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1854-1994, 1994; *A State of Readers, Nebraska's Carnegie Libraries*, 2005; *Water Resources of Nebraska*, December 1936; *Nebraska Traveler Magazine*, 2003; *Columbus Website*, 2004-2020; *Maps Tell A Story*, 1991; *NEDED Website*, 2005; *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th Edition, 1982; *The Crete Democrat Newspaper*, 1891-92; *Past & Present Platte County*, 2002; *History of Platte County website*, 2005; *The History of Platte County*, 1950; *Nebraska Place Names*, 1925, 1960; *Municipal Journal and En-*

gineer, 1909; *Municipal Journal and Engineering*, 1915; *Who's Who in Nebraska*, 1940; *Department of Labor and Department of Compensation*, 1917-18; *Electric World*, Vol. 69 Part-2, April 7, 1917; *BLS 1905-06 Report*, 1907; *Municipal Journal and Engineer*, Vol. XXVII, No. 17, 1909; *Nebraska Blue Book*, 1918, 1920, 1928, 1942, 1946, 1978; *Sanborn Maps*, October 1885, November 1889, July 1899, September 1909, December, 1914; *Annual Report of Nebraska State Railway Commission to the Governor*, Issue 20, April 15, 1928; *Biennial*

Report of the Auditor of Public Accounts to the Governor of the State of Nebraska, Nov. 30, 1890, 1890; *Utilities Section solid waste survey*, 2015; *The Insurance Year Book 1915-16 Fire and Marine* 43rd Annual Issue, 1915 and *History of Platte County, Nebraska*, 1876.

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Online training available

The Utilities Section 16 webinar sessions still are available for viewing and receiving credit hours.

Grade 6 credit hours can be obtained by viewing the

"backflow bundle" of four sessions (two 1-hour and two 1.5-hour sessions) are available for members and nonmembers. This group can be viewed individually or as a bundle with all four ses-

sions.

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Nebraska utilities history – Alda

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 robhp@lonm.org.

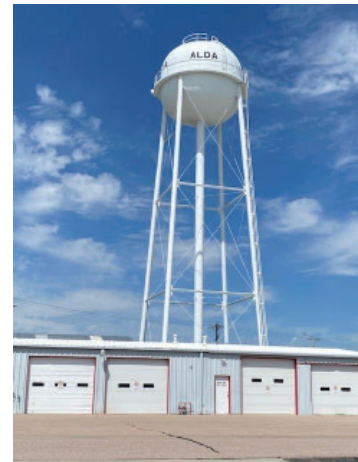
*By Rob Pierce, LNM Field Rep./
Training Coordinator*

Alda, located in Hall County, was organized Nov. 4, 1885. The county boundaries were defined by the territorial legislature and approved. The boundaries were redefined Feb. 1, 1864, and again March 1, 1871. Hall County was named for Augustus Hall, Chief Justice of the Territory of Nebraska (1858) and a former Congressman from Iowa. In May 1859, an early settlement, originally called Pawnee, included a stage station and a post office, which was located just south of the current town site. The name “Pawnee” was not accepted by the post office due to confusion with mail bound for Pawnee City.

On Sept. 7, 1871, a post office was established as Alda. The name was in honor of the first white child, a daughter of a section foreman born within its borders. The community had a store (1871) and a Hall County School (District #12) in 1872. Grand Island was laid out by the Union

Pacific Railroad in the spring of 1866 and as the railroad moved to the southwest, the community of Alda moved to where the tracks were being laid in 1873. A store soon opened and a grist mill was built in 1876. In February 1881, a general store opened along with a hotel and blacksmith shop in 1886. The Quakers built a church in 1894 and the Methodists built a church in 1895. In 1899, the population was 110 and a lightning fire destroyed the school building. The school added a ninth grade by 1908 and a 12th grade by 1912. A lumberyard was established in 1910 and by 1912, telephone service was installed. The first garage was built in 1912. Alda was incorporated as a village in 1916 with a population of about 200 and businesses included a section house, a railway station, a grocery stores, a grain storage facility, and a school. By 1919, the electric distribution system was supplied by Central Power Company's area power plants.

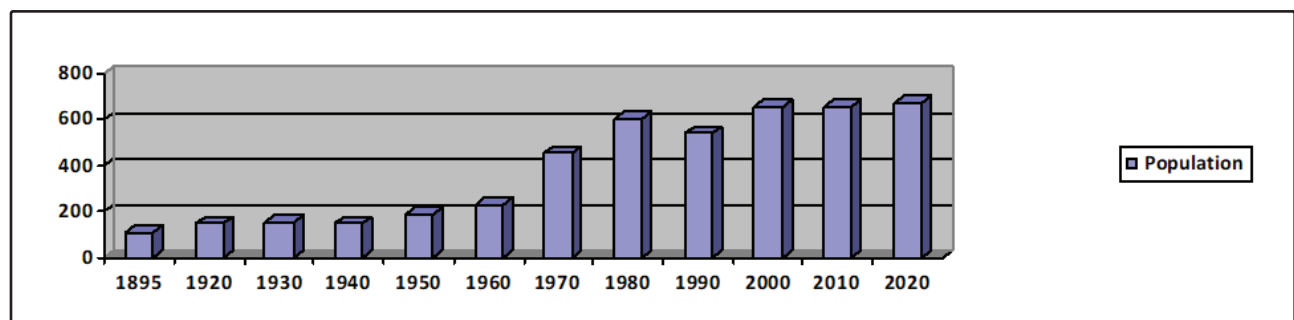
In 1920, a hotel was operating and by 1925, a new two-story



Alda water tower. 2020 photo.

brick school building was erected. In the 1920s, Alda won an award for a road at every section as a “Mud Tax” was incorporated for paving roads. By 1930, the population as 153 and the red/white Alda Bulldogs competed in high school athletics. The population was 151 in 1940 and in 1941, the Central Power Company dissolved with the electric system sold to Consum-

Continued on page 13



Nebraska utilities history – Alda

Continued from page 12
ers Public Power District. The Central Power Company's fuel and natural gas holdings were sold to the Northern Public Service Company. There was not a local newspaper in 1942 and during World War II, a munitions plant was built one-and-a-half miles north of town. From 1950-1960, the population increased from 190 to 229 and the high school closed in 1957. Garbage was collected by a private collector in 1962, charging residents and businesses \$1.50 per month. The electric current was purchased from Consumers Public Power District and the meter deposit was \$3.50. The cost of streetlighting was about \$17.90 per month in 1962. The village issued sewer bonds in November 1968 for a sewer project. By 1970, the population increased to 456 and the electric distribution system was owned by the village and served by the Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD). In 1972, the village owed \$62,000 on the sewer bonds.

By 1980, the population was 601 and the gas system was operated/supplied by Northwestern Public Service Company. The water system consisted of two wells, averaging 90 feet in depth with a pumping capacity of 950 gallons per minute (gpm) with an elevated storage tank capacity of 100,000 gallons in 1996. In the late 1990s, the lagoon wastewater treatment system was expanded as new controls and lift stations were installed for \$250,000 in addition to \$728,900 in loans and grants. In the 1990s, the school system merged with School District #84 in Wood River. The Alda Cem-

etry was located about 0.9 miles southwest of town. The population increased from 540 in 1990 to 652 in 2000 and the village operated a facultative retention lagoon system, located south of the village. The gas system was supplied by Northwestern Public Service Company via a three-inch pipeline with an operating pressure of 60-80 pounds per square inch (psi). The electric current is fed by 34.5 kV from three sources, tied to NPPD's statewide 115 kV grid system. In 2008, the fire department had an ISO Class rating of 6 and 10 and by 2009, the village was looking into a grant of \$277,000 to install meters and hook up to Grand Island's Water System. The streets in Alda were hard surfaced streets with little curbing.

By 2010, the population was 657 and collection service was provided by Waste Connections (2011). Collection services in 2015 were provided by Heartland Disposal and Recycling along with Mid-Nebraska Disposal Inc., and hauled to the Grand Island Landfill. By 2016, the village had a newer metal city office and community center facility. The water system had one active and two inactive wells connected to the Grand Island water system. Customers included 26 commercial and 224 residential, all metered.

Today, Alda has a population of 670, has been incorporated for 105 years and has been a League of Nebraska Municipalities and Utilities Section member for over 44 years. The natural gas system is supplied by Northwestern Public Service Company and the electric system operated/supplied by

Southern Public Power District.

References: Nebraska Directory of Municipal Officials, 1962, 1965, 1968-2008, 2011, 2014-2020; Water Resources of Nebraska, December 1936; Perkey's Nebraska Place Names, 1995; Nebraska Place-Names, 1925, 1960; Alda Website, 2005, 2009, 2020; Nebraska Our Towns... Central & North Central, 1989; Pages of History, Nebraska High Schools Past & Present, 1854-1994; Maps Tell A Story, 1991; NEDED Website, 2005; Wikipedia website, 2018; History of Hall County Nebraska, 1920; Andrea's History of the State of Nebraska, 1882; Johnson's History of Nebraska, 1880; History of Hamilton and Clay Counties, 1921; History of Hall County, 1920; Nebraska Historical Building Survey Reconnaissance Survey Final Report of Hall County, Nebraska, July 1995; Nebraska Blue Book, 1942, 1946, 1978 and Utilities Section solid waste survey, 2015.

Utilities Section members only

Do you have equipment to sell or a position to fill? Place your ad in the Classifieds section of the *Utilities Section Newsletter* free. This service is a membership benefit.

Contact Brenda Henning at the League office at 402-476-2829, fax to 402-476-7052 or email your ad to brendah@lonm.org.

Reminder: Water, wastewater license renewal year

All water (1-4 and 6) and wastewater licenses are due for renewal by the end of this year. Water licenses are due by Dec. 31, 2021, and wastewater licenses are due two years from the date the license was issued.

Water licenses require 10 hours of continuing education hours and wastewater licenses

require 20 hours of continuing education hours.

Schedules of remaining classes can be found on the sponsoring entity's website or the schedule insert operators received in December 2020 with the list of available classes.

Be sure to keep all certificates from the classes you attended in case you are audited.

Nebraska wastewater systems recognized

Several facilities were recognized with "Scott Wilbur Awards" at the Annual Nebraska Water Environment Association Conference banquet held Nov. 4, 2021. The following wastewater treatment plants received the Scott Wilbur Award for "Outstanding Facilities": **Chadron, Columbus, Norfolk, North Platte, Wahoo,** and Tyson Fresh Meats of Lexington. The "Innovation Award" went to the **Fremont Wastewater Treatment Facility.** The "Best of

Class" awards for *industrial* went to Hornaday Manufacturing of Grand Island, *small system* to **Scottsbluff**, *medium system* to the **Lincoln Northwest WWTF**, and *large system* to **Lincoln Theresa Street WWTF.** Note: Large Facility is >5 million gallons per day, Medium Facility is >2 million and <5 million gallons per day and Small Facility is <2 million gallons per day. **Utilities Section members and associate members highlighted in bold.**

"Just For Fun" Answers

A-1. Benkelman. A post office was established as Collinsville on Dec. 6, 1880, in honor of Moses Collins, an early settler. On June 29, 1885, the post office changed the name from Collinsville to Benkelman in honor of J.G. Benkelman, an early settler.

A-2. Nebraska City with 1,922. Omaha and Bellevue followed with populations of 1,883 and 924 respectively. Some others included Fort Calhoun – 306, Plattsmouth – 474, Falls City – 473, Fremont –

250 and Lincoln at about 30. *Reference: 1860 Census.*

A-3. Tilden was originally called Burnett and under the latter name was laid out by the railroad in 1880. It was then incorporated as Burnett in 1885, but the U.S. Post Office officially changed the name of the village in 1887 in honor of presidential candidate Samuel J. Tilden due to confusion with Bennet, Nebraska. Tilden was incorporated as a city in 1919.

A-4. Auburn (2020 photo). This plant was completed in 2011.

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

You can request them by contacting the League office by email brendah@lonm.org, fax 402-476-7052 or call 402-476-2829.

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SAFETY/HEALTH CORNER

Lockout tagout reminders

*By Rob Pierce, LNM Field Rep./
Training Coordinator*

The six steps of a lockout/tagout (LOTO) procedure include: 1) An authorized employee (trained person performing the service/maintenance) with an understanding of all types of hazardous energy associated with the equipment so the hazardous component(s) can be controlled. Specific energy hazards may require special or numerous equipment or procedures to control the energy hazard. 2) Next, notify all affected workers in the area, shut the equipment down and isolate the energy. 3) Isolation may include many sources of energy such as cutting power, closing valves and blocking or disengaging moving parts. 4) Attach locks and tags to the energy, isolating devices to ensure they can't be

switched on. 5) Test the switches to make sure the energy source is disconnected and the equipment has been locked out. 6) Be sure to verify the isolation of any stored or residual energies before performing any maintenance.

Once the maintenance has been completed, notify and safely restore/re-energize the equipment. Always double check that all tools, material or other debris are not left behind and all equipment components are back in place, such as machine guards or other safety items. Remove all locks and tags while informing all affected employees the work is complete. Re-energize the equipment and double check that everything is running properly and don't forget the access panels or control devices that may not be in the immediate area. Sometimes

out-of-sight, out-of-mind can be a bad assumption. Make sure all locks, unused tags and other tools and equipment get back to their proper areas (LOTO station) and are in proper working order for the next job. Some facilities require paperwork to be done such as check out and check in of items from the LOTO station along with a signature.

LOTO Procedure

- 1) Prepare for shutdown
- 2) Notify individuals in the affected work area
- 3) Shutdown and isolation
- 4) Control stored energy
- 5) Verify isolation and perform work
- 6) Remove locks and resume operations

Credit hour reminder

Operators need confirmation of water and wastewater credit hours for the past two years of the "Snowball Conferences" and the "Utilities Section Annual Conferences."

These can be found on the League of Nebraska Municipalities' website at www.lonm.org under the heading of "Utilities," then under "Water and Wastewater Credit Hours."

Both the water and wastewater divisions at NDEE have been sent those lists.

2021 OSHA Releases (Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov.)

Since August, OSHA has issued new releases that covered hazard recognition, exposure to health concerns, construction worker suicides, trench collapses, engulfment issues, noise-related safety concerns, bypassing of safety rules, confined space issues and general construction safety.

In October, the news releases covered trench collapses, welding fatalities, crane collapses and exposures to occupational, exposure to hazardous substances and health concerns.

In November, (Region 7 area)

focused on electrocutions. Data from 2019 showed more electrocution fatalities than in 2018 with four in the Region 7 area in 2021.

When looking at safety topics for your municipalities upcoming safety meetings, be sure to address recent issues within your utility and also utilities that do the same type of work. Working with your contractors also can be a plus when addressing safety topics. Many small systems contract most all of their construction projects out to private companies.

Safety trends

*By Rob Pierce, LNM Field Rep./
Training Coordinator*

Some safety trends noticed in 2021 include smart personal protective equipment (PPE), user preferences in PPE, autonomous vehicles, drone use, heat-related safety issues, a shift from detection to prevention when it comes to safety, training and retraining focus (refresh skills), new worker initial training and the need for information transfer, micro learning and online learning options pros and cons.

The past few years, workplace substance abuse (alcohol and prescription drugs) opioids, and

how the use affects productivity, absenteeism and moral.

With all the retirements, changing of jobs and new technology being used, maybe we should focus on the future workforce and the ever-changing workplace environment when it comes to addressing safety issues. When making safety decisions, five areas come to mind that need to be addressed: 1) communication – the lost art; 2) assumption – often noted as the mother of bad decisions; 3) dedication or care-

teamwork – should mean we, not I; 4) liability-taking responsibility – eliminating the blame game; and 5) new technology – accepting change and acquiring the knowledge needed to adapt.

It seems the human element is to resist change, but nothing sits still. Was it Newton's third law that indicated with each action there is a reaction? Or maybe he was referring to two objects colliding. **Either way, we should ask whether change is always good or just different?**

Water systems receive safety awards

The Nebraska Section American Water Works Association (NS-AWWA) recognized four water systems for safety. The purpose of the awards is to recognize distinguished NS-AWWA member public water systems for their safety records and respective active safety programs. There are two designations: "Certificate of Recognition" and "Certificate of Achievement" in the respective classes: Class I (1-4 operators), Class II (6-10 operators), Class III (11-15 operators), and Class IV (more than 15 operators). This year's awardees for the "Certificate of Achievement" are: Class I Division – **Chadron**; Class II Division – **Beatrice**; and Class III Division – **Norfolk**. In the "Certificate of Safety Recognition," the awardee was Class III Division – **Aurora**. Congratulations!

Wastewater systems receive safety awards

The following safety awards were presented by the Nebraska Water Environment Association at the annual banquet held Nov. 4, 2021.

Safety awards in their respective categories were: *Industrial* – Lexington Tyson Foods (Gold) and Michael Foods (Gold), **Wakefield** (Gold); *1-4 Operators* – **Scottsbluff** (Gold) **Lincoln** Northeast WRRF (Gold), **Wahoo** (Silver) **Chadron** (Silver), **North Platte**

(Bronze), and **Beatrice** (Bronze); *5-9 Operators* – **Norfolk** WPC (Gold); *10+ Operators* – **Freemont** (Gold), **Grand Island** (Silver) and **Lincoln** Teresa Street WWTP (Bronze). Once again, no lagoon applications were submitted.

The "Burke Award" was given to Tyson Fresh Meats of Lexington for the second year in a row. Congratulations to all systems for their safety awards!

NIOSH Pocket Guide

Looking for a chemical hazards reference guide? The NIOSH Pocket Guide to Chemical Hazards (NPG) informs workers, employers and occupational health professionals about workplace chemicals and hazards. The Pocket Guide is designed to provide chemical-specific data to supplement general industrial hygiene knowledge. The guide

provides information on chemical names, structure/formulas, CAS numbers, RTECS numbers, DOT identification and guide numbers, synonyms and trade names, conversion factors and exposure limits. More information can be found at www.cdc.gov/niosh/npg/.



Classifieds

Water/Wastewater Apprentice/Operator. The City of Broken Bow Water/Wastewater Department is accepting applications for full-time employment. This position involves, but not limited to, construction of new water and sewer mains, tapping services, maintain city infrastructure, clean-up of job sites, and assisting other departments as needed. Multiple skill levels are needed. Department of Health and Human Services certification and NDEE certification preferred, but not required. CDL not required, but must be able to obtain CDL within 6 months. Willing to train the right person. Wage dependent on qualifications and a better than average benefit package. Applications and job description are available at the City of Broken Bow located on the main floor at 314 S 10th Avenue or www.cityofbrokenbow.org. Submit application and related information to the City of Broken Bow, 314 S 10th Avenue, PO Box 504, Broken Bow, NE 68822, or via email at ccranwell@cityofbrokenbow.org. Broken Bow is an EOE. For more information, please contact Water/Wastewater Superintendent Craig Cranwell at (308) 870-1203.

Power Plant Production Manager. The Auburn BPW (www.auburnbpw.com) is looking to hire a Power Plant Production Manager. This position will be responsible for the operation, maintenance and repairs of the Auburn BPW Diesel/Gas Generation Plant and substation equipment. Duties will include repairs maintenance, operation, monitoring and control of the power plant generation equipment, monitoring

of the electrical distribution and SCADA systems. For a full job description, please contact Auburn Board of Public Works, 1600 O Street, Auburn, NE 68305, email dhunter@auburnbpw.com or call 402-274-4981. Interested applicants can send resume to the above address, attention General Manager, or email. Position open until filled.

Electrical Lineman. The City of Burwell, NE is accepting applications for a full-time Electrical Lineman. Applicants must be a U.S. citizen, possess a valid driver's license with the ability to attain CDL within six months of hire. Benefits include vacation, sick time, retirement, family medical and holidays. Salary is negotiable based upon experience and qualifications. Interested candidates should contact the City Office at 404 Grand Avenue (PO Box 604), Burwell, NE 68823 or phone 308-346-4509. The application and job description also are available on the city's website at www.burwellonline.com. Completed application along with a cover letter and resume should be mailed or delivered to the city office address above or emailed to cityofburwell@nctc.net and will be accepted until the position is filled. The City of Burwell is an EOE.

FOR SALE

1989 International Dump Truck with Snow Plow and Salt Spreader – Minimum Bid \$8,500. The Village of Elm Creek will accept written bids until 12 pm on Thursday, Dec. 16, 2021. Minimum bid of \$8,500. Truck will be sold to highest bidder.



In-person inspections may be scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 14, 2021, by appointment between 8 am and 11 am. Public bid opening will be held at 12 pm on Thursday, Dec. 16, 2021, on the grounds of the Elm Creek Village Center at 535 W Boyd Avenue. Terms of the sale are cash. The Village reserves the right to reject any and all bids. Notice of this sale shall be published in a legal newspaper and posted in 3 prominent places within the village for a period of not less than 7 days prior to the sale of the personal property pursuant to NE RSS 17-503.02.

Forbes Ranking: Nebraska

According to the Forbes website, Nebraska ranks among the top five states in "FORBES" Best States for Business for the fourth straight year thanks to its low business costs and business-friendly regulatory climate. Lincoln is the state capital, but Omaha stands as Nebraska's largest city and economic center. Over the last five years, Nebraska's average unemployment rate ranks second lowest in the country. Reference: www.forbes.com

2022 Training calendar

Visit our website at www.lonm.org
for a complete list of workshops and conferences.

**Due to COVID-19 guidelines, future workshops and conferences
may have to be rescheduled, cancelled or held virtually.**

January

Jan. 12-14 Utilities/Public Works Section Annual Conference.....Embassy Suites, Lincoln
Jan. 19 Water Operator Training Workshop.....Fire Hall, South Sioux City
Jan. 20 Water Operator Training Workshop.....Library, Blair
Jan. 25 Water Operator Training Workshop.....Holiday Inn, Kearney
Jan. 26-27 Snowball Conference.....Holiday Inn, Kearney

February

Feb. 8-9 Meter ConferenceHoliday Inn, Kearney
Feb. 28-Mar. 1 Midwinter Conference.....Cornhusker Marriott, Lincoln