

Do The Right Thing



by Steve Grimm,
Wastewater Technician

Times are tough. Budgets are tighter than, well, you fill that one in. Many of you are stuck between the proverbially rock and a hard place. I too find myself in that same situation in both my personal and professional life. Sorry. I'm not going to talk about my personal life (turn the page. No gossip here). In the spirit of doing the right thing, let me start.

It has been brought to my attention that the opening paragraph of my article "Chase That Flow" may have offended some people. Let me preface by saying that the statements were not intended to single out any one group, but rather to illustrate, in my opinion, a long standing problem. Almost every system I visit has a bookcase full of collection system videos and smoke testing logs. 1978. 1982. 1987. 1993. 2004. The operators can tell me where the smoke will come up, where a collection line is compromised. My point is simply that there is, in most cases, more than enough historical evidence to move a potential project ahead. All I was trying to say is the evidence is already there.

Speaking of doing the right thing. How about Honeoye Falls. "Our" wastewater system of the year. These guys are on top of things and know how to do it right. It is true that in the past year they have had permit violations. Since changing from rock to plastic media in the trickling filter, they have been in and out of compliance while learning how the new media will act. Chief Operator Brian Anderson and his assistant, Todd Marble, have been working with DEC, providing documentation required for a permit modification. I have worked with them on the suspended solids issues. Since installing a VFD on the recirculation pumps, these violations have subsided.

Superintendent, Greg Emerson, has extensively researched grants, and found some in the most unlikely of places. The Village was able to do a storm sewer project with the \$600,000 in grants it secured. This project reduced flow to the treatment plant by providing a place for the residents to put their sump pumps. Thinking outside the box (I hate that expression, but it really fits here). Through a combination of public relations and public information, they have been able to enforce the sump pump portion of their sewer use law. And most of what they do is done in-house, saving the ratepayers

tons of money. Violations be darned (yes, I actually used darned)! These guys deserved the award.

In these challenging economic and political times, some may think they are doing themselves or even their employer a favor by, shall we say, turning a blind eye to certain activities or events. Remember one thing. It's your hide that will be nailed to the wall. A few simple rules to live by. If you didn't do it, don't record it. If you see it, report it, even if it means you will have to fill out one of those pesky non-compliance reports. And lastly, and maybe the most important rule, when in doubt, ask. Don't assume, ask. We all know how to do our jobs properly. Do yourself a favor. Heck, do me a favor. Do the right thing. ♠