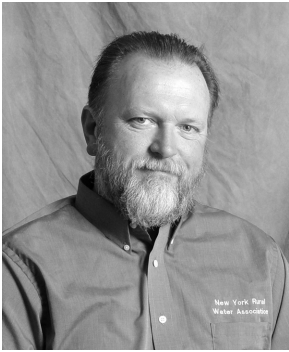


Networking for Small Systems: Get to know your neighbors

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While traveling throughout the different regions of New York State, it often comes to my attention, that small systems have varying degrees of expertise and professionalism. While some systems are at the cutting edge of technology, others are still struggling with decades old technology. These are trends that seem to have a

direct bearing on the amount of cooperation and assistance small systems receive from neighboring communities. My observations lead me to believe that neighboring operators who get together on a regular basis, tend to have more successful and professional day-to-day operations. These communities are more likely aware of each others resources and equipment, and feel more comfortable sharing these resources, than communities that do not foster these relationships. Networking is probably an over used term these days, but it is the term that can best be used to describe these sometimes complex relationships between inter-municipal personnel. I think it is equally important that these networking relationships extend to all levels of employment: Mayors, Supervisors, Clerks, Operators, and Laborers. You would not be comfortable borrowing your next door neighbor's lawnmower unless you felt you knew them well enough to ask them for it. The same holds true for municipalities, if you are not comfortable enough to ask, you probably will not ask. Networking can save communities a considerable amount of money when it comes to sharing manpower, equipment, and expendable resources such as fuel, oil, hypochlorite solution, etc. There is buying power associated with bulk quantities of just about anything, so use your imagination. I would hope that the most important aspect of these relationships is the sharing of knowledge gained through years of operating, maintaining, and repairing your community water supply. Sooner or later you are going to be faced with a situation you have not encountered before. It would be of some comfort to you to know that maybe, just possibly, your colleague down the road has encountered this problem before and has a possible solution. Systems that share the same brand of meters could probably realize huge savings on meter replacement and billing software. As we move into the radio-read era, the possibility of sharing the expensive radio-read devices would make sense for small communities. I find it somewhat ironic that there are communities that are close neighbors that have not yet found

this common ground. It is the right time to explore these unique and reliable relationships. If you have not yet made an attempt to work and communicate on a daily basis with a neighboring Town or Village, I would urge you to take the time and expend the effort, you will more than likely reap huge benefits from a minimal amount of effort. 💧

