



HUNKERING DOWN

Kevin Maine | Apprenticeship Manager

As my old Chief Operator used to say, “It’s times like this we should hunker down with a six pack and a video and see what happens”. At the time of writing this article, we are in the second day of Governor Cuomo’s Executive Order mandating that 100% of the workforce must stay home, excluding essential services. Obviously, our water and wastewater infrastructures are essential services. That being said, we may have to change our operating schedules and plans (hopefully for the short term). Plan for interruptions including chemical delivery, interacting with the public, wastewater and water system emergencies, clogged sanitary lines, lift station failures, customer complaints, and our fellow operators are becoming sequestered or ill for extended periods of time.

Let’s take advantage of some of the down time we may be experiencing. This would be an excellent opportunity to review or create vulnerability assessments and emergency response plans. You may want to consider creating or reviewing your shared service agreements and SOPs as well.

New York Rural Water Association’s download page lists two Vulnerability Assessment templates, the first in Microsoft Word™ and the second in PDF format. The Vulnerability Assessment is approved by the New York State Department of Health. However, it is easily modified to reflect the needs at your wastewater treatment plant as well.

After reviewing your Vulnerability Assessment, it’s time to create or review your emergency response plan. Again, New York Rural Water’s download page lists two Emergency Response templates, the first in Microsoft Word™ and the second in PDF format. As before, the template can be easily modified to reflect wastewater operations.

Are your SOP and O&M manuals up to date? Have you changed any of your Standard Operating Procedures and not made note of them? O&M manuals: have you replaced equipment or updated equipment that has not been reflected in your Operations and Maintenance Program?

How about shared services? When we think of shared services, typically we think of trucks, backhoes, graders, pumps and other heavy equipment. We should also consider operations manpower.

As you may know, the regulatory agencies require us to have a Standard Operating Procedure in place so in our absence

someone can come in pick up the manuals to start operating our facilities. As you are aware, it’s very difficult for someone to walk in cold and begin operations just by reading the SOP Manual. I do recommend whoever you select to help during an emergency, spend a few days at your facility so they can learn the nuances of operating your treatment facility efficiently and in compliance. Finally, be sure they meet all the certification requirements for the position that they will be filling!

Hopefully, by the time this article goes into print and distribution, the pandemic COVID-19 will be resolved and we will be returning to some sense of normalcy by then. However, it is never too late to review our Vulnerability Assessments SOP’s O&M Manuals and Share Services Agreements etc.

Remember, all our circuit riders are available to assist you with any of these plans and assessments. Feel free to reach out to us anytime for assistance! 💧💧