

A HOT, DRY SUMMER

By Joe Redmond

This past summer has been one of the hotter and drier ones that I can remember in some time. This type of weather can put quite the strain on water operation specialists, both physically and mentally. Simply repairing a water line in 90 plus degrees makes you feel like you ran a marathon.

With the heat comes a rise in surface water temperatures, then the algae and weeds begin to flourish. Our disinfection byproducts increase and may go over the EPA limit. Filters at the treatment plant start to plug up faster and require more frequent backwashes or in slow sand filtration, more draining and shoveling. Organic iron and manganese can get into the high ranges causing the water at the tap to be discolored and brownish. Then comes the customer complaints. Cleaning of the slow sand beds is labor intensive and at the end of the day, operation specialists are worn out. Not to mention that the day was 12 hours or more by the time you got done flowing fire hydrants until the water was clear again at the customer's tap.

Now let's add in the fact that we had little to no rainfall in parts of New York State. Some wells have gone dry, no surface water runoff is coming into the reservoirs. The water levels are now low. You had to put off the fall hydrant flushing until spring to conserve water. Now, more residents are calling about discolored water. The operation specialist must flow hydrants very slowly to clear the main without stirring it up worse if water production

even allows. The chlorine residual is dropping on the ends of the system causing you to use more at the plant. But now the chlorine companies are behind delivery schedules because of a lack of drivers and an increase in swimming pool deliveries. We can hope that by issuing water use restrictions, the mains will settle out and the water will clear up. We also can hope for cooler temperatures and some rain.

While most people are out enjoying the perfect hot and dry summer, the operation specialists are silently working overtime to ensure they have safe clean drinking water. One of the worst parts is that the customer's may think you are not doing anything because their water might be a bit discolored until they run the tap for about 15 minutes.

This is the kind of job we chose. Some days are better than others, but it truly can be a thankless career. Very seldom do we hear from a resident because they wanted to say how great their water was. So, here's to you, water operation specialists! On behalf of us, we say, Thank You! 💧💧

Joe Redmond
Apprenticeship Trainer
redmond@nyruralwater.org

