



THE IMPORTANCE OF STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

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A standard operating procedure is a document that tells you how to operate something correctly. For example, how to add chlorine to a day tank, the correct dose for chlorine or any other chemical you are adding, how to properly backwash a filter, etc.

When I first started working toward getting my water certification, I had to go to a Laboratory class and in this lab class I remember being told that in 10 years 80% of the water operations specialists would be eligible to retire. That was eight years ago. When I used to talk to operations specialist it was always “two more years until I retire”, and they have been saying that for the last five years. That all changed when the pandemic hit. Then the operations specialists were forced to stay home due to Governor Cuomo’s 75% work force reduction order put in place. The older operations specialists loved having all the free time to do what they have always wanted to do. Now, when I visit water plants and ask the operations specialist how they are doing they say good, and I only have two more months until I retire. This is happening all over the state. Therefore, it is so important to have a standard operating procedure in place for the new operations specialist taking over. This is a guide that will help them run the plant.

I go to a lot of small private water systems like mobile home parks, office complexes and small water systems that have under 100 connections. I did not understand the importance of the standard operating procedure until the pandemic. A lot of water systems were affected by COVID-19 when the operations specialists were exposed or infected. It was hard to find people to take their place for two weeks or longer and who knew the operating procedures required on a day-to-day basis. That meant instead of resting and recovering, they would have to be on the phone explaining how to operate the plant. If they had standard operating procedures in place, all they would have to do is refer them to this document for information and guidance in handling the situation.

Fortunately, the pandemic is ending but retirements will continue and there will always be unforeseen events occurring. It is important that you have formal system operating procedures in place so that those individuals doing the work follow proper procedures and succeed. If you are interested in more information or would like assistance with the development of standard operating procedures, please feel free to reach out at wissenbach@nyruralwater.org or leave me a message at 518-828-3155 ext. 340. 💧💧