

John Parsons

Denne Scholarship Application - Importance of the water industry

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My knowledge of this subject is borne from my experience being thrust into this industry shortly after my 70th birthday. I had just bought a house in Goodrich when a man came to give me a boil order. I told him I wanted to help the city and would do whatever I could. That man (Skip Minot) who is now my colleague and friend, went back to the City council and told them, "I have found a young guy who can help us." This is how I became the water operator in Goodrich!

Over the two years since then I have been thrust into a whole new career and I have begun to comprehend the vitality and the challenge of maintaining a safe public water system. I have been immensely helped by the good folks at NDRWA. Chuck Mischel took me under his wing and I felt like everyone was really keen to help me learn.

The foundation really is the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974. While there certainly was a water industry prior to that, the modern water industry exists to enable public water systems to fulfill the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act and other legislation which exists to keep our drinking water safe.

This is no small matter. I think I pulled close to 40 water samples in my first year as a water operator. I vividly recall talking with Jim Kershaw Superintendent of Bismarck Water Treatment Plant as he showed a bottle of brown river water and talked about the typhoid outbreaks in the late 1800's and early 1900's. That was when Chlorine began to be widely used to disinfect water from bacteriological pathogens. It is still a very important part of disinfection to this day. I began by taking Bacti samples, coached by Chuck Mischel right away. A key part of taking these samples and sending them to the State Lab is measuring the Chlorine residual in the water. The

Free Chlorine level tells you how much Chlorine is left after the chlorine used in treatment has been absorbed. In short it is a good indicator of whether there is enough disinfectant to kill off the bad bacteria.

I have found much help from companies in the water industry involved in manufacturing test instruments and selling chemicals involved in water treatment.

However, I need to say that the water industry is much more than just chemicals and disinfection it is really a huge community that is geared to deliver and treat water. Keeping water safe in the ground from contaminants is a huge part of this. so we have manufactures of piping valves and couplings all of which are very necessary to help communities get access to to safe and clean drinking water. We also have a huge part of the industry engaged in designing and creating water treatment plants and systems. Then we have all of the people who work at every level in this industry from governance to those who dig up the streets.

I currently serve both Goodrich and Minot as a Water Operator. I feel very honored to be a part of this community and to do my part to help deliver safe drinking water to the communities I serve.