Staff Updates: Region 8 Drinking Water Team Changes

Andrea Griese, Region 8's drinking water Tribal assistance contact for North and South Dakota retired from the EPA last month after working for the Agency for 23 years! We all wish Andrea well and will miss her knowledge and expertise in solving drinking water issues. Colby Brakke was hired in October to backfill for Andrea in the Pierre, SD office.

Bryce Faliskie, formally with WaterTA/BIL Funding, has transitioned to a new position in DW in State oversite and Cyber Security. TA is still available, and info can be viewed in the Resource: WaterTA section in this newsletter.

Angela Mendrala has transferred to Region 8 from EPA Region 7 (Kansas City) to take over the PWS Inventory and Treatment/Source Changes Manager position recently vacated by Bolor Bertelmann. Angela is now the main contact for any changes in inventory, contacts, treatment, or sources.

THIS MONTH

Staff Updates: Region 8 Drinking Water Team Changes

Training: 2024 Virtual Operator Conference: Up to 12 Hours of CEU Credit for Free

Training: General Module & Very Small Water Systems Training Course and Credential Exam

Webinar: PLC Security, Understand the Threat and How to Protect Your Utility

Webinar: Water Contaminant Information Tool (WCIT) - Learning the Basics

Resource: Cyber Incident Response Guide

Resource: WaterTA

Resource: Lead Service Line Inventories (LSLI) Monthly Office Hours – Ask EPA

Upcoming Regulatory Deadlines

Key EPA Contacts

Training: 2024 Virtual Operator Conference: Up to 12 Hours of CEU Credit for Free

This free, virtual training conference offers drinking water operators a chance to learn more about timely topics, improve fundamental skills, and get support for specific challenges while earning up to 12 hours of CEU credit. While there is no substitute for in-person training, this online event was created to specifically target operators of small and rural public water systems who may not have the means or ability to travel. Conference instructors are technical assistance providers from the RCAP network.

Over three days (February 6-8, 2024) participants can earn up to 12 continuing education hours applicable to their drinking water operator license renewal.

Topics for this free, online event include PFAS, partnerships, lead and copper, operator math, DBPs, and more. Each session is delivered by a technical assistance professional from the RCAP network. Register now to save your spot.

CEU Information

Currently pre-approved in:
•	Alaska, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming

Currently acceptable in:
•	Alabama, Arizona, California, North Dakota, South Carolina, Virginia
Approval in process for all other jurisdictions. Updates listed on the event registration page.

[Register for this FREE Event](#)

Training: General Module & Very Small Water Systems Training Course and Credential Exam

Free blended online and in-person course opportunity for operators of Very Small Water Systems
Part 1, live On-line	**Part 2 In-person, Billings, MT**
February 13, 15, 20, 22	**February 26-March 1, 2024**

The Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc. (ITCA) is pleased to offer the General Module & Very Small Water System training course. The course offers over 42 hours of training and is designed to enhance the skills and knowledge of Tribal water utilities personnel.

The General Module portion of this training course is designed for tribal utilities personnel entering the career path of water and wastewater system operations for the first time. The course provides a solid foundation on the principles of electricity, hydraulics, water and wastewater systems, basic math, and federal regulations. ITCA Level 1 water and wastewater operator training courses are designed with the expectation that students have already taken introductory training on the topics that are covered in the General Module. This training course additionally covers introductions to topics of drinking water treatment and distribution. The entire training course is ideal for preparing Tribal utilities personnel for the operations and maintenance of very small water systems (VSWS). Training reference materials will be mailed to registrants that are accepted into this course.

During the second part of this training course, an optional credentialing exam session will be offered for free to allow eligible applicants to take the Very Small Water Systems credentialing exam. Attendees that are only interested in the training may choose not to take the exam.

Includes: Comprehensive training for Tribal utilities personnel
	Opportunity for FREE Professional Credential / Certifications
	Travel Expense Reimbursement Stipends Available

[Course Brochure](#)
[Registration Link](#)

Webinar: PLC Security, Understand the Threat and How to Protect Your Utility

On December 6, 2023, EPA hosted a free webinar with important updates on the recent hacking of Unitronics Programmable Logic Controllers (PLCs) at US Water and Wastewater Systems.

Speakers from the EPA, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) provided mitigation actions and cybersecurity best practices utilities can implement to protect against this threat.

Webinar: Water Contaminant Information Tool (WCIT) - Learning the Basics

Thursday, February 22, 2024, 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm EST

The Water Contaminant Information Tool (WCIT) is a secure database containing information about priority contaminants of concern for drinking water and wastewater systems. This 30-45 min webinar is an introductory training that provides a comprehensive overview of WCIT, including benefits of use for different stakeholders. In addition, a live demonstration of the tool is conducted to cover its content and basic use of the database.

Target Audience: New WCIT users, current WCIT users who would benefit from a refresher course, and Stakeholders with interested in sign up for a WCIT account.

Webinar Registration:
https://gdit.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJIscuisrTgoGt48WmrIMtahgwWvZF13FdQ#/registration

Resource: Cyber Incident Response Guide for the Water and Wastewater Sector

With contributions from 25+ Water and Wastewater (WWS) Sector organizations spanning private industry, nonprofit, and government this joint guide, co-sealed by CISA, FBI, and EPA provides incident response best practices and information on federal resources.

The WWS Sector has been impacted by various cyber events, including unauthorized access, and ransomware. Continued compromises or failures of the WWS Sector could cause cascading impacts across critical infrastructure. The guide outlines how water utility owners and operators can expect to work with federal partners as they prepare for, respond to, and mitigate the impact of a cyber incident.

This guide aims to enhance WWS Sector cybersecurity by:

Establishing clear guidance for reporting cyber incidents,

Connecting utilities with available cybersecurity resources, services, and no-cost trainings,

Empowering utilities to build a strong cybersecurity baseline to improve cyber resilience and cyber hygiene, and

Encouraging utilities to integrate into their local cyber communities.

Cyber Incidence Response Guide

Resource: WaterTA

All communities deserve access to clean, reliable water. Yet too many communities across America face challenges in providing safe drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater services to their residents. The Bipartisan

[Infrastructure Law](#) presents an unprecedented opportunity to address water infrastructure needs by providing $50 billion in new funding – the [largest federal investment in water in the history of our nation](#). New and existing EPA [Water Technical Assistance (WaterTA) programs](#) will be utilized to support effective implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

What is WaterTA?

EPA's free Water Technical Assistance (WaterTA) supports communities to identify water challenges, develop plans, build capacity, and develop application materials to access water infrastructure funding. To implement WaterTA, EPA collaborates with states, tribes, territories, community partners, and other key stakeholders. Learn more about **[WaterTA services and programs](#)**.

Help for Your Community

EPA WaterTA aims to assist communities with applications for federal funding, quality infrastructure, and reliable water services. If your community is facing water infrastructure challenges and could benefit from support, we encourage you to learn more about **[who can receive WaterTA and the challenges WaterTA can help your community address](#)** then complete and submit a webform request by clicking on the link below:

[Request Water Technical Assistance for Your Community](#)

Resource: Lead Service Line Inventories (LSLI) Monthly Office Hours – Ask EPA

Jill Minter, Lead Service Line (LSL) Coordinator, and Erica Wenzel, Lead Copper Rule and LSL Specialist, will be holding virtual Lead Service Line Inventories monthly office hours, from 10am to 11am Central Time, and at the same time on the 3rd Wednesday of every month. The next office hours meeting is December 20th. This will be a time for operators and managers to ask EPA any questions on developing lead service line inventories as well as hear questions from other operators. An email will be sent out each month to tribal public water system contacts with the LSLI Office Hours Teams meeting link, which is also copied below.

If interest is high, we can schedule additional LSLI Office Hours. We are thinking that holding monthly LSLI Office Hours will be an efficient way to answer questions and share information that may be common to multiple systems. The forum should also provide a good opportunity to learn from other operators who are also developing inventories and facing similar challenges. Do consider attending to listen in even if you do not have questions to ask that month. While we have scheduled monthly Office Hours, please know that water system operators and managers are always welcome to contact EPA with questions by email or by phone as well.

Monthly Meeting Info (3rd Wednesday of every month):

Microsoft Teams meeting
Join on your computer, mobile app or room device
[Click here to join the meeting](#)
Meeting ID: 216 909 557 054
Passcode: e2Efid
[Download Teams](#) | [Join on the web](#)

Or call in (audio only)
[+1 202-991-0477,,904938593#](#)   United States, Washington DC
Phone Conference ID: 904 938 593#

Upcoming Regulatory Deadlines

Date	Event	Location
Last day of every calendar month	Last day to collect monthly total coliform samples	Sites approved on your RTCR sample plan
10th of every month	Last day for EPA to receive total coliform and DBP samples collected during the previous month	N/A

Key EPA Contacts

Region 8 Tribal Team

Motaz Zarooq – Denver, CO Office – 303-312-6780 – zarooq.motaz@epa.gov
Colby Brakke – Pierre, SD Office – brakke.colby@epa.gov
Megan Falk – Helena, MT Office – 406-457-5041 – falk.megan@epa.gov
Joe Faubion – Helena, MT Office – 406-457-5005 – faubion.joseph@epa.gov

Other R8 Drinking Water Employee Contact Information Can be Found Here.

This newsletter can be viewed online by visiting: https://www.epa.gov/region8-waterops/epa-region-8-tribal-drinking-water-monthly-newsletter.

If you would like to be added or removed from this newsletter distribution list, please email brakke.colby@epa.gov.