

Operation Manuals

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With the water cooler conversations regarding vulnerability assessments and emergency response planning being the primary topic as of late, the thought of covering the subject in an article made me cringe a little. Having added the regulation as part of a drinking water protection plan, as an addendum to the contingency plan, (yet another way to describe the same element), it is felt that possibly the subject did not need another's point of view. Oh, well! Here we go again! What is attempting to be achieved with the article is to place you right in front of the last major subsection of the regulations, 333-061-0064 (2) (c) (A-E) (d).

Having been out and about speaking with operators, council and boards, developing interest in the development of drinking water protection plans, the last section of the above regulations, outlines the specifications for operational manuals. See below:

- (2) (c) The water system operational manual shall include, but not limited to, the following elements if they are applicable;
- (A) Source operation and maintenance;
 - (B) Water treatment operation and maintenance;
 - (C) Reservoir operation and maintenance;
 - (D) Distribution system operation and maintenance;
 - (E) Written protocols for on-site operators describing the operational decisions the operator is allowed to make under OAR 333-061-0225.

Under OAR 333-061-0225, what does that mention? Well, I am glad you asked!

333-061-0225 Summary:

The first point made from regulation 333-061-0225 is that all water suppliers must utilize an operator designated to supervise the water system; "be in direct responsible charge of the water system, and to be available during those periods of time when treatment processes and operational decisions that affect the public health are made."

Point two is all operators must be certified at a level equal to or greater than the classification of the water system.

Points three through five (a-d) explain the extent that which the owner must follow and outline the

decision making process of the operator that has been assigned the responsibility of the position.

To put in layman's terms, the person operating the public water system must be competent, certified and be able to perform the tasks at hand to ensure water is delivered to the consumers, making choices by following a handbook.

Now that all is clear as mud, the emergency response plan initially is to be written to assist in worst case scenarios, many in which the majority would say, "That won't happen in my town!" Most of us understand the work involved in running a water system, yet we are all disposable. We often hear of something happening to someone, and say, "That could have been anyone of us."

The operational manual referred to in (A-E) previously, represent a chart that when completed, should allow anyone to come in and run the water system if something should happen to the operator(s). Because of this statement, most of the water operators should be feeling pretty low right now. The regulations are basically stating that these manuals are providing a school book for every Tom, Dick and Harry to come in run the public water system. That can be one way to look at it! Another view would be; with the emphasis so high on the manuals describing the importance of providing clean drinking water, so the same importance can be placed on your position as an operator.

The last ruling of the emergency response plan regulation is quoted below:

- (2) (d) Water system staff shall be instructed and trained in the use of the water system operations manual.

Operational manuals can be another way to systematically outline the standard operating procedures, usually referred to as SOP's. The rulings regarding the manuals have a purpose and if looked at carefully begin and end in the same fashion as water itself. Water customarily begins as a source, which when modified to convert to drinking water, has inherently man made devices linked to it. It is precisely these devices which require maintenance from time to time. How do you

maintain a source, especially if that source is surface water?

If the water is in its purest form, many still need to treat it to insure that the quality stays at levels to protect all, at all times. (Treatment)

Unless you have more water flow than needed, one needs storage capacity for times when flow isn't up to par (i.e. reservoir, storage tank).

Now that we have water stored in a well constructed tank, the people who are your consumers simply drive up and tap the tank until there quantities are sufficed! NOT! Is it 2005 or 1905? We today simply expect to open a tap and have the water flow, with the qualities expected from years which have come to be the norm. Indirectly we just found the reason for a piping system. (Distribution)

Decision making processes are just that; a sketch as to why you do the things that you do. If during normal sampling, a hit is found and it just happens to be coming up at one end of the system, you know from first hand experience how the system can be isolated, flushed, disinfected and put back into normal mode of operation. What would happen if the hit was found while you are in the backwoods packing out the state record elk? Everyone is trying to contact you, yet no luck. The people just go without water until you get home, NOT! Or the mental pressures persuade you from heading out to the woods in the first place.

See the importance of operation manuals. We all understand that fixing the problem with the water system cannot be just read out of a book, or that the someone can come in and perform the task with the efficiency as one with everyday experience. But for the low percentage times when an operator may be put out of action, a manual would sure be handy to jump start the procedures.

It is believed that we have all been in a situation, where a task has been thrown upon us, and we have to figure it out. Have you been in a new job where your predecessor's apathetic attitude assured you the right amount of training? NOT! This is just a case in point for the value of an operational manual.

Now if you have yet to begin writing the operation manual for the public water system in which you are employed, this is a friendly reminder. The regulations state that you have to have just such. Please review the regulations for the complete

wording. The summary of the regulations should be taken as that. Unfortunately, assistance is limited, since no one knows the characteristics of the water system better than you, the operator. Specifics to the content of your manual, is under your nose, and that is the system itself. What you do each day, each week, month or annually, have to be written out, so while the writing goes on, make sure you take a break and visit the water cooler, hopefully you will have a different topic to dazzle your co-workers. The best that life has to offer to you and yours! Mr.OpTIMist.