Solving the Workforce Challenge

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Robert A. Hollander, President
AZ Water Association

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The Workforce Challenge

- Agenda
  - Defining the Challenge
  - Why does it matter?
  - What is the AZ Water Association doing?
  - What more can we do?
Defining the challenge

- 2010 Water Sector Workforce Sustainability Initiative Report (Water Research Foundation)
  - 30-50 percent to retire between 2010 and 2020
- Bureau of Labor Statistics
  - 3% decline in water/wastewater treatment and system operators between 2016 and 2026.
Defining the challenge (continued)

- Some staff reductions from automation and other efficiencies
- Increasing complexity of systems will require more sophisticated and better trained workforce
Why does it matter?

- Impacts of improperly operated and poorly maintained water and wastewater facilities
  - Degraded water quality
  - Reduced water pressure
  - Inadequately treated wastewater
  - Sanitary sewer overflows
  - Reduced lifetime for infrastructure
  - Odors
  - Public health and environmental impacts
  - Regulatory agency enforcement and fines
  - Potential litigation
  - Degradation in public relations and trust
What is AZ Water/AZ WEA doing?

- **AZ Water Leadership Learning Series**
  - Once/month breakfast meetings
  - Presentations by and discussions with Arizona water industry leaders
    - Utility Directors/General Managers, NGO Leaders, AZ Water Past-Presidents, Officers
  - Assigned reading
  - Podcasts
What is AZ Water/AZ WEA doing (continued)?

- Linking veterans to water profession opportunities
  - Capitalizing on veteran characteristics of “discipline, dedication and desire”.
  - Partnering with national organizations
  - AZ Water working relationship with Luke AFB
  - Collaborations with universities and community colleges
  - Scholarship availability
What is AZ Water/AZ WEA doing (continued)?

• Active Young Professionals Committee
  • Six Sub-committees
    • Outreach
    • Student Affairs
    • Networking
    • Professional Development
    • Service
    • Resources & Marketing
What is AZ Water/AZ WEA doing (continued)?

- Annual Conference Job Fair
  - 4th year at 2018 Conference
  - Utilities, contractors, laboratories, consultants
  - Panel Discussion:
    - “What Skills Matter Now & in the Future?”
    - “Beyond the Resume: How to Market Yourself?”
    - “Lessons Learned in Navigating the Career Waters”
What is AZ Water/AZ WEA doing (continued)?

- **Home-grown operator training**
  - Operator 101 - History of WW Operation/Process Descriptions
  - Plant Processes - Process Operations/Lab/Data Collection
  - Operator Math - Basic Operations Math/Testing/Equations
- **Annual Conference Track devoted to Operator Training**
What is AZ Water/AZ WEA doing (continued)?

- Mentor Bank
  - Resource for operators and other industry professionals to seek guidance from senior members of profession
  - Technical and Career guidance
What is AZ Water/AZ WEA doing (continued)?

• Student Chapters
  • Arizona State University
  • Northern Arizona University
  • University of Arizona
What is AZ Water/AZ WEA doing (continued)?

- **Student Activities**
  - Student Design Competition
    - Undergraduate teams
    - Provide solution to real world utility problem
  - Student Poster Contest
    - Cash prizes
What is AZ Water/AZ WEA doing (continued)?

- School Outreach Program
  - Visit schools
  - Attend science fairs
  - Plant tours
  - Students visit Conference Exhibition
What more can be done?

- Inform public
  - Water industry jobs are critical
  - Water industry jobs are meaningful
  - Water industry jobs are well paying

- Keep workforce trained and up to date
- Support academic and vocational education and training
- We all are ambassadors to community, educators, students, to attract new talent
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