



Pictured L-R are Kevin Behnke, Tom Blaschka and Pat VanOuse, who recently graduated from the Electrical/Instrumentation program through NTC.

Three Employees Graduate From Electrical/Instrumentation Program

Wausau Water Works would like to congratulate Kevin Behnke, Tom Blaschka and Pat VanOuse on their recent completion of the Electrical/Instrumentation apprenticeship program at Northcentral Technical College. The employees attended classes for just under five years to achieve their journeyman status. Wausau Water Works appreciates the hard work of these employees to complete this program.

Two more employees have started the program this fall, Tim Mesalk and Glen Hoenisch. Wausau Water Works finds this type of training very valuable since the automation of the treatment facilities.

Rate Hearing Set for January 13, 2006

A joint telephonic rate hearing has been scheduled in the conference room of Wausau Water Works, 1st floor of City Hall, 407 Grant Street, Wausau, Wisconsin, and at the offices of the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin in Madison, at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, January 13, 2006.

The hearing will address the rate increase request of Wausau Water Works - Drinking Water Division to help offset a cash flow deficit, as well as helping to finance upcoming utility projects.

More information on the hearing can be found in the public notice on page 3 of this newsletter.

Sewer Rates to Increase in 2006

Sewer rates will also increase in 2006, the first increase since 1989. The boost in rates is required to offset increases in fuel, insurance, treatment chemicals as well as other operating expenses. An independent rate study was performed by Virchow Krause in 2005 which indicated that sewer rates needed to increase by 20%. It is expected that both the water and sewer rate increases will be put into effect in early 2006.



Professor Faucet's Winter Tips

Tip #1: Always protect pipes

from freezing! During winter months, it is important to remember that unprotected water pipes and water meters are vulnerable to freezing. To help prevent this problem, make sure that minimum heat (above 32 degrees Fahrenheit) is provided to basements or anywhere else where the water meter or pipes are located. Inspect these areas to make sure there are no water pipes near broken windows, open basement doors, or cracked basement foundations. Ol' man



winter is sure to allow a chilly draft to blow on exposed water pipes, causing quick

freeze-ups. In homes with improved basements, where water meters reside behind walls, open the wall space to allow ample air circulation and heat to flow around the meter. Also, pipes under kitchen and bathroom sinks that are located on outside walls are susceptible to freezing. Open the cupboard doors so that warm air can also help protect these pipes.

Tip #2: Thawing Frozen Pipes:

Before attempting to thaw a frozen pipe, the shut-off valve for the building plumbing should be located and operated. **This is important!** When thawing, if you were to discover that the pipe had a crack, you should immediately shut off the water supply. Shut-off valves are normally located on either side of the water meter. If you cannot locate the shut-off

valves, or they do not work, you may want to contact Wausau Water Works to shut your service off at the curb.

(Please note that we are required to charge a fee to turn the service back on.)



entire system. (Please note that we are required to charge a fee to turn the service back on, but it is considerably less than the cost of water used or property damage, if a pipe were to burst.)

When thawing a frozen pipe, never use an open flame! It is much safer to direct the hot air from a hair dryer at the section of pipe that is blocked by ice. Heat tape can also be safely used to thaw out a frozen water pipe.

Tip #3 - Protect Vacant Homes and Businesses. If you own a home or business that is vacant, safeguards need to be in place to prevent freeze-ups.

- Maintain heat in all areas of the building, including the basement. Thermostats should be set at 55 degrees or higher.
- Leave doors open under sinks or other closed areas to circulate warm air.
- Turn off the water heater. If it is electric, turn it off completely. If it is gas, turn the controls to pilot.
- Unplug water softeners so that they won't regenerate.
- If you **DO NOT** have hot water or steam heat, turn the water off at the valve by the meter.
- If you shut off your water by the meter, open the hot and cold faucets in the kitchen sink.
- Have a trusted friend or relative check your vacant home periodically, more often during extreme cold snaps.
- If you will be gone for an extended period of time, or the property will be without heat, you should contact Wausau Water Works to have your water shut off at the curb and your meter removed. You can then drain and winterize your

Wausau's Water is Safe and Healthy

Water quality has been in the news lately and we think that is a very good thing. The Environmental Working Group captured headlines by releasing a national survey and Internet web page with test results for municipal water systems. They reported the number of contaminants detected, as opposed to drinking water standards that were exceeded, to draw attention to this issue.

In light of the news stories, we need to emphasize that our tap water is safe and healthy to drink. **Wausau's water meets all state and federal standards and has never been better.** It simply is not true that there are a lot of contaminants in our drinking water or that drinking water in Wisconsin is more contaminated than other states. Even so, we would be the last to argue that we don't have challenges.

Wausau has many homes that were built when lead plumbing materials were commonly used. We encourage you to read the related story in this issue about lead in drinking water and understand whether you should be flushing your water line before using water for cooking or drinking. Wausau Water Works also recognizes the importance

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Water Quality -

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of keeping our system up to date. A few years ago we switched from using chlorine gas as a disinfectant to chloramines, a mixture of chlorine and ammonia, and this greatly reduced the levels of disinfection byproducts. Maintaining our infrastructure is expensive and will be a challenge in coming years. Aged water mains need to be replaced and new issues will have to be addressed.

Although we think headlines are often made to be alarming to attract attention, we appreciate that by working together the water supply industry will continue to improve. Please do not hesitate to contact us at 261-6530 if you have questions regarding water quality or lead in drinking water.

The Environmental Working Group data is at least 3 years old and outdated. Current results are available on the Wisconsin DNR's website at www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/dwg/

Northwoods Mist Aids Victims of Hurricanes

After the destruction of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Karl's Transport of Antigo decided to help with the relief efforts by donating a truck and driver to deliver a semi load of water to the victims. Quinlan's Equipment of Antigo approached Wausau Water Works to purchase *Northwoods Mist*. Wausau Water Works also wanted to help our southern friends and matched Quinlan's donation. We were happy to help those affected by the devastation of the hurricanes in the Gulf states.

Wausau Water Works Receives Safety Award from American Water Works

For the second consecutive year, Wausau Water Works - Drinking Water Division received an award from the American Water Works for no "loss time" injuries. The safety award was presented at the Wisconsin Water Association annual conference, which was held in LaCrosse, Wisconsin in September. Accepting the award on behalf of Wausau Water Works were Dave Erickson and Deb Geier. Working safely is very important to the employees of Wausau Water Works, and we are honored to receive this award for the second consecutive year.



PUBLIC NOTICE TO ALL CUSTOMERS OF WAUSAU WATER WORKS

Wausau Water Works has filed an application with the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSCW) to increase water rates. The increase is necessary to offset a cash flow deficit, and finance current and upcoming projects.

The total increase in water revenues requested is \$760,146, which will result in an estimated overall rate increase of 19% over the water utility's present revenues. If the request is granted, the water bill for an average residential customer with a 5/8-inch or 3/4-inch meter who uses 1700 cubic feet of water per quarter will increase from \$43.82 to \$51.58 or 18%.

A telephonic public hearing on the application has been scheduled for **Friday, January 13, 2006** at 10:00 a.m. in the conference room of Wausau Water Works, 1st floor of City Hall, 407 Grant Street, Wisconsin. Scheduling questions regarding this hearing may be directed to the PSCW at (608) 266-3766.

If you have any questions, please contact Deb Geier, Administrative Assistant, Wausau Water Works, at (715) 261-6533.

Lead and Copper in Compliance

The City of Wausau has many older homes that were constructed when lead plumbing materials were commonly used. Lead pipes are sometimes found in homes built before about 1930, and most homes built before about 1965 have lead service lines between the house and the water main, and lead solder was used with copper pipes up to 1984. Even today lead can be found in some new brass fixtures.

Wausau Water Works completed a testing program last summer on a group of homes that we have been monitoring for several years. The homes in our test group have lead service lines or copper plumbing with lead solder. EPA regulations require

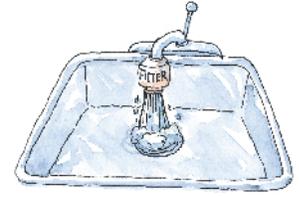
that 90% of the homes in our test group have lead levels of 15 micrograms per liter ($\mu\text{g/l}$) or less. The 90 percentile level in our last round of testing was 15 $\mu\text{g/l}$, just meeting the EPA requirement.

Lead is not found in our groundwater or water in the City distribution mains, but is absorbed from lead service lines and lead plumbing materials. The utility carefully monitors the corrosion potential of our drinking water to minimize the amount of lead absorbed from household plumbing.

We recommend that residents with homes built before 1984 flush their water line before using water for cooking or drinking. It takes time for the water to absorb lead, so the idea is to use water that has not been in contact with

lead plumbing materials for more than a few hours.

Adequately flushing the water line can require running 1 to 2 gallons of water to draw fresh water from the water



main. It would not be necessary to run as much water if the home does not have a lead service line, or if water has recently been used elsewhere in the house, to flush a toilet, shower or wash clothes for example.

Please contact Wausau Water Works at 261-6530 if you have questions regarding lead in drinking water, lead plumbing, or flushing requirements.