



# WITH THE FLOW

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## Monthly Message

I hope everyone is enjoying our mid-summer weather, finding the time to enjoy boating, camping, golf, just sitting around or whatever suits you.

Meanwhile, the Board is off until September, giving Jim Perry, Kendra Walker, Bob Drury and me some time to re-tool and catch up. We appreciate that we have an active and involved board, deeply attuned to the community and in-touch with the residents and businesses we serve. The dedicated members of the board, on an individual and collective basis, provide us with the well-considered policy directives and big-picture direction that are consistent with the governance role they are entrusted with and conform to the responsibilities contemplated at the time of the legislative action creating the NFWB.



Do board meetings get tumultuous at times? Yes. Are differences aired passionately? Yes. Are management prerogatives and board direction always perfectly lined up? No. But we work things out without rancor or distrust and arrive at mutually agreeable conclusions. Thus far, in my 6-months on the job here, with only a few exceptions, it works.



This issue of "With the Flow" includes, among other things, information on two important subjects:

- The availability of our Employee Assistance Plan (EAP). None of us wishes to be confronted with the type of personal or family crisis that causes emotional or other problems that can affect our job-performance and other aspects of our life. However, life sometimes deals us a bad hand and this is when an EAP can be utilized. The plan is there for us.
- On the job safety. Administrative Services Director Jim Perry is right on point with his "Safety is No Accident" commentary. To sum it up, nothing in what we do is more important.

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# Review and Update

## 1. SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH ENERGY CONSERVATION AND GENERATION

One of the initiatives I am currently developing is a sustainability action plan that addresses the widest possible range of energy efficiency programs with an emphasis on savings and conservation as well as collateral benefits such as improved health and comfort. One immediate outcome of the plan is the “greening” of the NFWB fleet as displayed in the photos found in this issue.

On the consumption side, as a recipient of low-cost power from the New York Power Authority, NFWB is able to save substantial sums on our electric bills, but, as I see it, this benefit should not be an invitation to complacency. So, with relevant staff members, and as an initial step, we are looking at LED lighting upgrades, perusing available New York State Energy Research and Development grants, evaluating solar thermal and solar photovoltaic systems, and studying the possibility of various on-site power generating projects, including wind, geo-thermal and even a “mini” hydro-electric system. Of course, all such ideas are in the early stage and it will be some time before the board is asked to give even a preliminary “go-ahead”, but the rationale behind this thinking is obvious – it is incumbent upon the NFWB and all governmental agencies to be “energy conservation conscious” and to understand the continuing commitment to acting in the best interest of the ratepayers.

## 2. WATER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

Work is progressing on reviewing large meters within the water distribution system to determine if any repairs or

replacements are needed beyond typical maintenance. Also, the system is being reviewed to determine locations of needed repairs and possible replacement. Together, these actions will assist the NFWB in prioritizing maintenance and planning of future improvements to the water system.

## 3. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The board has approved funds for Professional Development and Licensing which will be utilized in part as follows:

### A. WWTP

Goal: Operators to obtain NYS waste water licenses.  
Training classes: Buffalo State has started classes. They have scheduled August 28 for the basic Lab course. NFWB will obtain training materials and pass along any information sent by the instructor

### B. WTP

Since all WTP Operators are appropriately licensed at this time NFWB will obtain training materials in support of Continuing Education programs.

### C. In general, under the Professional Development category, we are looking into other licensing and certification options.

## 4. ENGINEERING AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONCEPTS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

- Analysis of Schoellkopf Tunnel for reuse for storm-water runoff
- Study of treatment process at WWTP
- Review of security system, safety protocols and management procedures
- Full physical asset management plan, including allocation and maintenance

# NFWB Employee Assistance Program

I think it's worth reminding ourselves of the availability of a well-managed Employee Assistance Program (EAP). After all, it is undeniable that many individuals, from whatever level of wage or salary earner, encounter challenging work-life issues that can be disruptive to them, to their families, their co-workers and their employer. And it certainly is in the best interests of all parties to find a means to correct job performance issues and to identify as early as possible progressive problems – alcohol abuse, chronic absenteeism, etc. that need attention.

The program in place for NFWB employees is overseen by Northpointe Council, Inc., a not-for profit human service organization governed through its Board of Directors and membership. Northpointe has been involved in education, counselling, treatment, emergency, and special services since

its inception in 1970. A wide range of specific and affiliated services through its interrelated programs. These services are provided to individuals, families, companies, schools, and the community. Its programs networking together form a continuum of care and services for Individuals. The NFWB has contracted this organization to help employees for several years and if you have issues that you feel you may need help with or professional counselling for we would like you to utilize them as part of your benefit package.

Counsellors and others work in complete confidence with their clients but the first step is yours. Check them out at <http://www.northpointecouncil.org/contact-us> or call them at (716) 284-2255. You can contact Northpointe for a free confidential assessment and to learn of the referral services that are available to you and your immediate family.

# Emphasizing Safety

## “Safety Is No Accident”



By Jim Perry, Director of Administrative Services

A serious workplace injury changes lives forever – for families, friends, communities, and coworkers. Human loss and suffering is immeasurable. Occupational injuries and illnesses can provoke major crises for the families in which they occur. In addition to major financial burdens, they can impose substantial time demands on uninjured family members.

Every person who leaves for work in the morning should expect to return home at night in good health. Can you imagine the knock on the door to tell you your loved one will never be returning home? Or the phone call to say he or she is in the hospital and may never walk again?

As a Human Resources Professional one of the disciplines I have had continuing training in over the years has been occupational health and safety. I have watched over the past several decades that area of concern come from the birth of OSHA to a full-fledged career producing certified professionals specializing in that field of study. Yet a lot of people do not take it seriously. They make excuses why they cannot do things safely. At the NFWB this is not an acceptable attitude.

Coming from the petrochemical industrial and an OSHA VPP culture I place a high premium on workplace safety. One of the areas I have noted that needs extensive work is this organization’s understanding and total emphasis on safety. This shortfall is never the failure of any one or even a handful of people. Rather, it is more often than not the result of a culture and the failure of that culture to make needed adjustments to adapt to new regulations and accept the spirit of those new ways of doing things.

Over the past several years not only have laws changed quite extensively but so have the attitudes of both labor and management in the way safety is viewed. While we may face off against each other at the bargaining table, it is imperative that we share the same goals when it comes to worker safety. Our quest in safety at the Niagara Falls Water Board is to have zero accidents.

Gina Senia is our Safety Specialist with her office at the Waste Water Treatment Plant. She is responsible to me to make sure we have policies and systems in place to meet government standards. Although she has worked hard at it, we are far from where we need to be. And, for me, meeting the standards are not good enough.

This past month I have given Gina a couple of mandates. First, I expect to have an incident investigation database in place so we can track and document every near miss and incident we have. The reason for this is to make sure we take steps to avoid, to the extent possible, the repetition of a mistake once made.

Second, I expect everyone to start following our safety procedures. I am not the type of manager who wants to write people up, suspend, or terminate people, but more important than that, I do not want to have to call someone’s spouse and tell them to meet me at the hospital.

We will take whatever steps needed to eliminate hazards where ever we can. I have also said that there will be a greater accountability. I will expect supervisors to warn and discipline anyone who violates a safety procedure. If it comes to my attention that a supervisor is overlooking safety issues in his or her areas, I will hold that supervisor accountable. No excuses will be accepted.

Asking me to overlook a safety procedure is the same as asking me to willfully put your health in jeopardy. I would not want you to do that to me and I will not do that to you.

Please, work safely, and watch out for your fellow workers.



# Inductive Couple Plasma Mass Spectrophotometer (ICP-MS)



Acquired for Drinking Water Quality Laboratory, Increases Lab Efficiency and Creates New Revenue Stream

When board member Nick Forster visited the Drinking Water Quality Laboratory shortly after he was appointed he was given a thorough lab tour with an explanation of the important work done there. It was explained to him that, among other things, the lab is responsible for the collection and analysis of samples for Lead and Copper in the distribution system pursuant regulations of the NYS Department of Health and the federal Environmental Protection Agency. After collection the samples were outsourced to certified commercial laboratories for analysis. Now, after Board approval of the purchase and installation of the Shimadzu ICP-MS, the lab can simultaneously analyze up to 25 different metals, including lead and copper, which are known contaminants of drinking water. For over 20 years the laboratory has been required to monitor both lead and copper levels in resident's homes in Niagara Falls along with a list of ten other metals (IOCs) in drinking water, a process that is now much simplified via in-house sampling.

The ICP-MS is environmentally and user friendly and will achieve cost savings by:

- Providing the ability to measure major components simultaneously, thus reducing sample preparation time.
- Reducing the amount and purity of Argon gas required by a third or more when the instrument's "eco-mode" is enabled.
- Cutting down on cleaning and servicing costs due to its easily maintainable interface.

In addition, the ICP-MS will allow for the expansion of testing contracts to other municipalities, school districts, day care centers and other facilities in neighboring areas, thus creating a revenue source for the NFWB. Interest has already been shown by some potential customers and it is expected that once the word gets out to a wider audience contracts will be negotiated and activated. Its clear at this point that we can look forward to the new instrument helping our laboratory become "instrumental" in aiding other organizations and adding revenue to the bottom line of the NFWB.

## Fleet News: Going Green!



The balance of the new NFWB fleet vehicles have been delivered and placed in service. The fleet is now safer to operate, far more fuel efficient and less expensive to maintain.

Left to right, Lou Fratello, Max Greco, Zack VandenBosch, Cameron Flynn, Ed White, John Summerson, Board member Nick Forster, Foreman Mike Eagler, Mike Ross, Mike Cheff and Cortez Bradberry

# Feedback

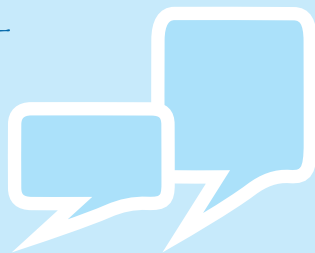
I appreciate the feedback received on last month's newsletter and am printing with permission the comment below. Nick's "two cents" matter to me and I will seriously consider his suggestions, including tighter contract specifications and a procedure for anonymous internal communication. I have prior experience with suggestion boxes ending up as trash receptacles (literally and figuratively) but am willing to consider some variation thereof.

Send comments, suggestions, etc. to: [eshcroeder@NFWB.org](mailto:eshcroeder@NFWB.org)

Thank you and best regards,



RP



I read the recent newsletter and had a comment about some of the projects from an electrical stand point. At the waste water plant, gorge pumping station and the LaSalle lift stations, there is Hydrogen Sulfide (H<sub>2</sub>S) gas present in the air. The H<sub>2</sub>S is especially corrosive on copper components. During my time here I have fixed countless problems that was a result of H<sub>2</sub>S. A suggestion I have is to address the issue in the job specs. They make electrical wire, components, equipment and enclosures for corrosive conditions. It's more expensive, but I feel the juice is worth the squeeze. Another suggestion I have regarding that, is to put into the job specs that the termination and splice points to have an antioxidant applied as these are the locations of the failure.

To hit on another topic in the newsletter, it was mentioned about setting up leadership training and development. One task stated was to create a collaborative work environment with more energy and more self-reliance. The workers cannot be totally blamed for the work environment and attitude that was facilitated by previous management. I remember seeing a speaker talk who said what motivated people more than money was to have a job they felt engaged in. A job where they felt appreciated at and where they felt their opinion was at least taken into consideration. Maybe there could be something more anonymous than emailing suggestions and comments. Some people may not be as graceful with their words as to where they would feel comfortable making comments to management with their name stuck to it. Lots of people don't even have a computer here to get an email out to you. Perhaps something like a suggestion box. Maybe if there's a project in the works, the employees could at least be asked their opinions on it. Even with something like the GPS and lone worker system, it more or less appeared out of thin air and is jammed down your throat. I think if employees were brought together and projects explained and open discussion had, they may be more accepting to it. That's just my two cents.

Nick Coyle

