



# WITH THE FLOW

Volume 1 No. 6  
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## Monthly Message

As the city of Houston moves forward with recovery and rebuilding necessitated by the catastrophic Hurricane Harvey, Florida digs out from the fury of Hurricane Irma, and Puerto Rico assesses the widespread damage from Hurricane Maria, it gives us pause to reflect on the human and economic toll that a natural disaster can inflict. We are saddened by the loss of life and property and hope that all of those impacted will receive adequate aid and assistance to help them return to a degree of normalcy as soon as possible. The outpouring of donations from around the world certainly suggests that many differences are being set aside and attention focused on the common good.

On a practical level, the season's storms also remind us that we can find ourselves at the mercy of weather conditions that exceed even the most scientific forecasting. Certainly, the likelihood of over 50 inches of rain falling in less than 4 days is so slim that it defies anticipation. No wonder they call Harvey a 1000-year event! In fact, as we all well know, it is weather events in the form of heavy rains that occasionally result in the discharge of untreated sewage from the WWTP. Of late, at least since the incident described on page 2, such discharges have been widely noted and commented upon.



Of course, it wasn't a weather event that caused the now infamous July 29, 2017 "inky black water" discharge into the lower Niagara River. (If I didn't mention the incident in this edition of the newsletter, I'm sure many would think I am avoiding the "elephant in the room"). So, despite the on-going inquiries and the seemingly endless news stories and editorials, I have something to say about the matter that I think our cadre of dedicated workers should know.

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# The “Incident”

## The “inky black” discharge of 7/29/17

The Niagara Falls Water Board is being scrutinized from all angles following the July 29 discharge event. So, I'd like to take this opportunity to provide you with an update. But first, I want to thank every employee of this organization for your support and for focusing on your duties, despite the outside distractions. The support of the board at every stage has provided senior management, our legal team and our engineering and environmental consultants with the needed resources to represent our interests fully. I also acknowledge and appreciate that many of you have been stretched to the limit to respond to document and information requests from the government. We have been asked to provide a huge amount of information that has taken a lot of time and diligence to gather, but NFWB employees have answered the call and no one can claim that the NFWB has not been fully cooperative.

As for the inquiries that are underway, we are confident that we ultimately will be able to demonstrate to the outside agencies and to the public that the NFWB and its employees have and continue to act with all due care, and have done their best to work with the resources available. The silver lining of this process is that a spotlight has been shown on

the need for substantial upgrades in our WWTP – perhaps even a complete change in the treatment process – calling for state and federal investment to align our system with the service area's current needs. These needs have changed quite a lot since the plant was designed nearly 50 years ago; a time when there was a need to accommodate industrial wastewater that barely exists today. Our ratepayers simply cannot shoulder the enormous costs associated with modernizing or replacing the existing WWTP on their own.

As the regulatory inquiries proceed (with a draft “Consent Order” having been received from the DEC recently) we are doing everything we can to respond promptly to all requests, and to make information available. NFWB consultants, including AECOM, are providing technical assistance in preparing reports and responses and we look forward to the resolution of all matters related to the July 29 discharge as well as to a wet weather event of August 15, 2017.

Updates will continue to be posted on the NFWB website as information becomes available. Be assured that the Board and staff remain committed to the highest quality of waste water treatment and the treatment and distribution of drinking water consistent with public health laws and regulations, the public enjoyment of natural resources, the protection of fish and wildlife, the economic development of the city of Niagara Falls, NY and the general well-being of the surrounding area.



Photo by Kristin D. Fundalinski



# Employee Profile: Mike Eagler

It didn't take long after my arrival at NFWB as Executive Director to learn that the supervisors and rank and file of our outside crews are an extremely valuable resource. In a very significant way they are the face of the organization, visible to ratepayers and others who are in need of our services. Not to mention the "sidewalk superintendents" who simply want to observe a crew at work – and maybe offer unsolicited advice. We are often judged in the public's mind by the conduct and work habits of these crews. So it is gratifying that we have people like Mike Eagler and Bill Wright as the foremen, respectively, of "outside wastewater" and "outside water". This profile will focus on Mike Eagler.

Mike Eagler wastes no time, the guy is a ball of energy seemingly always ready to spring into action. He wastes no time in making it clear that as the outside water foreman [official title: FOREMAN - (Pipes) - Wastewater Collections] he is only as good as the men he works with. He wastes no time in pointing out that he has a very solid working relationship with Bill Wright, the other NFWB outside foreman [official title: FOREMAN - (Pipes) - Water Distribution]. These two men have developed a mutual respect and trust that allows them to manage their respective departments while at the same time maintaining a certain degree of "overlap" that makes each man's job easier while more efficiently accomplishing all tasks at hand. Superintendent of Operations Bob Drury views the outside foremen as crucial to the mission of the NFWB. He says, "These two men have done outstanding jobs under sometimes difficult circumstances. They never complain or make excuses. And there is no doubt that both of them have embraced their leadership roles with the resultant improvements in workforce morale and greater efficiency."

Eagler also wastes no time in crediting others for helping him grow and succeed in his career. He recalls ruefully the six-month period after learning from Wright of an entry level maintenance job opening at the WWTP. To prove a point that many of us at NFWB know well, the job remained vacant for all that time.... Civil Service hold up? Slow paperwork? Business as usual? (Hopefully not anymore.) But take your pick. In any event, despite having been told by then Director of Infrastructure Mike Kessler the old standby of "don't call me, I'll call you", Eagler persisted, calling to check in twice per week for the six-month period until Kessler finally named him to the maintenance position.

In addition to Kessler and Wright, Eagler quickly lists a handful of others that have mentored, trained, encouraged, counseled and advised him along the way. Bill Mancuso, Rick Rotella, Bill Milroy and Kim Kargatis are just a few of the colleagues to whom he feels indebted.

While the walls and whiteboard in Eagler's office at the WWTP reveals his fondness for quotes from others, his own, such as: "the present is the future", help reveal his world view. While on his career path at NFWB, spanning a mere seven years and counting, during which he rose to his present position, he never eyed the next job up, he just did the best he could in the one he was in at the time... he made his future the present, each day offering opportunities to learn and grow but with the real focus on finishing the work in front of him. He describes the process as not looking at the big picture but I see it more as knowing, or at least believing, that if you do the best job that you can good things will happen. Looking over his work history here at NFWB, one sees how starting at the entry level and working through various positions -- from cleaner to laborer to the vacuum truck to construction and everything in between -- proves the point of believing in yourself and, as a bonus to the organization, provides the best, and most likely to succeed, prelude to being a good leader.

As for one of the issues that many at NFWB consider as a defining characteristic of the organization, that is, the political nature of the operation that for some breeds a culture of suspicion and intrigue, Eagler takes things in stride and keeps his opinions to himself. Citing the examples of the complete fleet revamp and the acquisition of a lighting tower that greatly improves nighttime outdoor working conditions, he does express appreciation for the willingness of the Board to go beyond listening and actually take actions that improve working conditions.



Outside of the NFWB Eagler lives a full and active life. Again, in his self-effacing way, he says it is a simple life but I think more accurately it can be described as a focused life. Focused on his family, including his wife Julie, Medical Staff Coordinator of the Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center, whom he credits with keeping him grounded and for being the perfect person to vent to and to act as a sounding board. He adds, "I don't know where I would be without her. He's proud of his two sons, Dennis and Michael, and finds time to lavish attention on grandchildren Mia and Cooper, seen above. He also works hard at keeping his lawn in "best in class" shape, or, in friendly competition, at least better than Cortez Bradberry's.

# Safety Tips



## ENSURE THERE IS PROPER GUARDING ON MACHINES AND ROTATING/POWERED HAND TOOLS!

Machine guarding is extremely important because it protects us from the dangers posed by rotating parts, flying chips and sparks. See the attached incident "alert" that describes a recent recordable injury that occurred, in part, due to a missing guard.

## DO NOT INTERFERE WITH MOVING OR OPERATING MACHINERY!

While machinery is operating, do not interfere with it or the person operating it. Operating equipment such as the belt filter presses contain moving parts that you must keep clear of. Touching a moving machinery part is an easy way to get a limb caught, potentially resulting in a serious injury or fatality.

## ALWAYS WEAR THE REQUIRED PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT!

If a task requires specific personal protective equipment, always wear it - no exceptions! Safety equipment is required for a reason. For example, if you need to wear safety goggles for transferring or mixing liquid chemicals, they are required because they protect your eyes from possible splashes created by the task.

### Recordable Injury ALERT

**Alert Date:** 7-26-17

**Alert #:** 2017 - 01

**Type of Incident:** Recordable NLWC **Site Location:** WWTP Flocculator Area at Sed Basin #4

**Title:** Maintenance employee incurred left forefinger laceration while using unguarded hand grinder

**What Happened:** On 7/20/17 a semi-retired painter was using a hand grinder to remove rust and to prepare the rough surface of the steel flocculator area at sedimentation basin #4. The guard was not attached to the hand grinder that the employee was using. The employee momentarily took his eyes off the task while the grinder was operating and cut his left forefinger. The employee received 3 sutures to his left forefinger (below the first knuckle) and a tetanus vaccination was administered.

#### 'Why Did It Happen?

Use of improperly guarded hand tools and momentary lack of attention to task which placed employee's hand in the line of fire.

#### Cause(s) / Contributing Factor(s)

1. Equipment Less than Adequate – grinder was missing the guard;
2. Safety Risk Review – risk acceptance criteria less than adequate; some employees stated that they knew that guards should never be removed but that it is cumbersome to use the hand grinder with the guard attached, especially when rounding corners or turning the tool
3. Training – employee is part-time (semi-retired) and has not attended monthly safety training – did not have machine guarding training

*(Note: Machine Guarding is an item that is reviewed on our monthly Safety & Housekeeping checklist).*

#### Corrective Actions

1. Reviewed incident with the employee and the interim supervisor; supervisor will attempt to locate missing guard and re-attach; supervisor will inventory similar equipment for missing guards and re-attach and/or replace equipment
2. Employee was "coached" on use of safety equipment and importance of not defeating a safety device; discussed "mind on task, eyes on task"
3. Safety Specialist to develop more efficient means for tracking training attendees and ensuring training is delivered to those not able to attend scheduled training events; develop means for tracking delinquency

#### Lessons Learned to Prevent this from Happening to YOU

- Always inspect tools prior to use and ensure safety devices are in place and functioning properly
- Be aware of your body position at all times – don't put yourself in the "line of fire"
- Eliminate all hazards before working – survey the scene, keep mind and eyes on task!

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Hand grinder that was used in this incident – note missing guard



Hand grinder used in this incident – another view, missing guard



Same grinder with guard re-attached

# Diversity from the HR Perspective

by James Perry

In my last article, I discussed the impact of Human Resource Management disciplines on Health & Safety. Now I would like to examine the discipline of Diversity. Let me start with an explanation of what I am talking about, because this is one of those areas most people outside of the HR community don't give a second thought about.

Diversity has many definitions. Frequently, organizations adapt the definition to their specific environment. Generally, diversity refers to the similarities and differences between individuals accounting for all aspects of one's personality and individual identity. Some of the dimensions of diversity include: age, color, disability, ethnicity/national origin, family status, gender,

Gender identity or expression, generation, language, life experiences, physical characteristics, race, Religion, belief and spirituality, sexual orientation, thinking patterns, and veteran status. All of these elements combine to determine how well an organization functions - or doesn't function.

Studies show that teams or organizations made up of individuals with a more diverse mix of qualities, experiences and work styles tend to have available a richer set of ideas, perspectives and approaches to a business issue as long as the organization is one that openly accepts and respects each other for what they bring to the table. Diversity provides the potential for greater innovation and creativity.

## Inclusion is what enables organizations to realize the business benefits of this potential.

Inclusion describes the extent to which each person in an organization feels welcomed, respected, supported and valued as a team member. Inclusion is a two-way accountability; each person must grant and accept inclusion from others. In such an environment, every employee tends to feel more engaged and is more likely to contribute toward the organization's business results. This type of environment requires people from diverse backgrounds to communicate and work together, and understand each other's needs and perspectives—in other words, demonstrate cultural competence.

Intercultural sensitivity and cultural (or intercultural) competence are characterized by sensitivity to differences

among people from different cultural backgrounds and effectiveness in communicating and working with them. People are similar or different in varying degrees across all dimensions of diversity. Research has also shown that people who are substantially alike tend more easily to communicate with and to understand each other. People who are very different tend to confront more obstacles to effective communication and mutual understanding. People consistently overestimate their intercultural competence, which poses a particular challenge for HR professionals.

## Relationship with Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action

There is widespread confusion about the relationship between diversity and inclusion on the one hand, and EEO and affirmative action on the other. This traces to the historical evolution of these complimentary yet distinct concepts. In the United States, EEO consists of fairness and equality of treatment for specifically designated protected classes as defined by law. EEO means that an employer must give equal consideration both in hiring and in the terms and conditions of employment to all individuals, and that an employer may not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, age, marital status, national origin, disability or sex.

EEO and affirmative action are primarily matters of legal compliance, although they do help create a workplace that is more supportive of all people and more diverse in terms of the specific included dimensions of diversity.

Many early diversity programs grew out of a company's EEO and affirmative action programs. Companies began seeing business opportunity in focusing on awareness and sensitivity training, and later on building inclusion and intercultural competence. But the diversity functional area has evolved well beyond EEO and affirmative action compliance. Diversity and inclusion are aimed at realizing competitive advantage and business opportunity.

The interrelationship between EEO, affirmative action, diversity and inclusion persists, in part because some organizational structures place functional accountability for the disciplines under one office. Though this interrelationship can lead to some continuing confusion, progress in each of these areas reinforces and helps achieve the objectives of the others as the discipline continues to evolve legislatively and in practical application. Within that framework, it is the goal of the Niagara Falls Water Board to make diversity, inclusion, and compliance practices work together for the common benefit of the workforce and our community.



# Correspondence, Memorials and Publications

## Recent correspondence of note:



**Division of Minority  
and Women's  
Business Development**

September 5, 2017

Dear Rolfe Porter:

Thank you for submitting your new authority's Annual Goal Plan for the utilization of minority and women-owned businesses (MBEs and WBEs) for Fiscal Year 2017-2018.

Your plan establishes goals of 10.00% MBE and 20.00% WBE for State Fiscal Year 2017-2018. This is to advise you that your plan is accepted, and will remain on file in our office as will any amendments you may submit as program changes occur.

Your Agency Services Representative from our division, Brendan Regan will continue to work with your new authority in the implementation of the provisions of Article 15-A.

As always, we appreciate your continued cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Lourdes Zapata  
Executive Vice President  
& Executive Director



September 11, 2017

NIAGARA GAZETTE  
473 Third Street  
Niagara Falls, NY 14301  
Attn: Don Glynn

Dear Mr. Glynn:

This is in furtherance of your recent column in the Niagara Gazette in which you referenced a certain inoperable fire hydrant on Main Street in front of the new Police Hq. After inquiry to our hydrant maintenance team it was ascertained that the subject hydrant was rendered inoperable as a result of damage to the cap that goes on the 4" nozzle off the hydrant. It turns out that the hydrant is located so close to the roadway that on a nearly yearly basis city snow plows strike the cap during snow plowing operations. Unfortunately, the hydrant is located too close to the street, making it nearly impossible to clear snow and avoid striking it. The hydrant should be relocated to prevent further out-of-service periods. Accordingly, we will be contacting the city engineer's office to coordinate the appropriate relocation of the hydrant.

Meanwhile, the hydrant was repaired and placed back in service on July 24 and is now fully functional.

As for recent events involving the Water Board, be assured that the Board and staff remain committed to the highest quality of waste water treatment and the treatment and distribution of drinking water consistent with public health laws and regulations, the public enjoyment of natural resources, the protection of fish and wildlife, the economic development of the city of Niagara Falls and the general well-being of the surrounding area.

Thank you for bringing the hydrant matter to the attention of the public and the Niagara Falls Water Board.

Sincerely,

Dan O'Callaghan  
Chairman

Rolfe Porter  
Executive Director



# Correspondence, Memorials and Publications

## Memorial

*In Memory Of Five Men Who Lost Their Lives On August 29, 1975  
During Construction Of The Southside Interceptor Tunnel  
When A 600 ft. Section In The Vicinity Of Royal Avenue  
And 38th Street Suddenly Flooded.*

*Robert Frank - 47, Steven Hill - 25, Waymon Owens - 60  
Joseph Della Valle - 46, Floyd Richard Wilcox - 42*

This August marked the 42nd anniversary of the tragic loss of the lives of 5 water department employees. Their memory lives on through the solemn memorial at the WWTP.



## Publications

The Waterkeepers (previously Riverkeepers) continue to do important work in the area of water conservation as they fight hard for every community's right to drinkable, fishable, swimmable water. The report below provides a closer look at their efforts and goals.



Click or go to link below:

<http://www.wben.com/sites/g/files/giy1201/f/State%20of%20Our%20Waters%20Report.pdf>

## Feedback

As always, your comments or suggestions on the subjects in this newsletter or other areas of interest are welcome and encouraged. Please contact me via email, phone or stop in to my office, if I'm not there say hello to Ericka and make an appointment to come back and see me.

Thank you and best regards,

RP

