SUSTAINABILITY

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As Circuit Riders we spend a lot of our time addressing the nuts and bolts side of operating a water utility. That's because the actual delivery of our product, water, is so challenging. In this article I thought I would write a few paragraphs about the "other" side of this business. That is to say, "the managerial side". It is often overlooked by operators who generally have their hands full just keeping it all together. The future of your water utility depends on the good managerial decisions you make today. It's about keeping a steady stream of operators in the pipeline. It's about setting aside funds to replace big ticket items like submersible pumps and water storage tanks. It's about *susta nab l ty.* Now that's a word that I can guarantee you will hear more of in the future. How many of you have taken the time to sit down with your Mayor or Supervisor and have a conversation about where you think your utility will be in 10, 15, 20 years? The key to *susta nab l ty* is the ability to look into the future, to have those types of discussions. Too many times I have seen systems that have not been prepared for a major project. Even though that storage tank or that filter cell may have been dropping clues for decades. Maybe it's time to assess some of those critical components and map out a plan for the future of your village or town water utility.

One of the keys to *susta nab l ty* is *asset management. Asset Management* is another term you are going to hear more and more often. *Asset Management,* in a nutshell, is a list of all of the assets of your utility. Your *Asset Management Plan* includes information that details when the asset was purchased, when it was put online, and how much it is valued at. The theory is that you estimate the life expectancy of the asset and then depreciate the cost over the estimated life expectancy of the asset. This is a tricky business and I guess that's why they call it a plan. But I think it will serve well to open the eyes of board members and decision makers who do not work around the assets day in and day out.

Asset Management Plans usually go into great detail about said assets and can be very helpful when ordering replacement parts or for emergency management plans. These plans can also be a big help when towns and villages are discussing rate increases and which pieces and parts will need to be replaced in the time frame of the rate increase. In our business, there has been in the past a precedent to run the system into the ground, and then replace the entire system. We are moving away from that now and through better management practices and better materials we may be able to take that 100 year life expectancy and stretch it out to 150 or 200 years. I hope this article gets at least a few of you thinking about *susta nab l ty* and the benefit an *Asset Management Plan* can be for your system.

Asset Management Plan templates are available from EPA (CUPSS) http://water.epa.gov/infrastructure/drinkingwater/pws/cupss/index.cfm

And from SEMS Technologies (CMMS)

http://www.semstechnologies.com/?page_id=240