



TRAINING: NETWORKING OR NET WORKING

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Since the New York Rural Water Association was founded in 1979, one of the main objectives of this association has been to provide quality training to you, our Water and Wastewater Operations Specialists across the entire state. Even after all these years, we pride ourselves on maintaining that tradition, and work diligently to promote relevant training topics in every corner of the state, at the lowest cost possible, on an annual basis. Over the years, our training programs have expanded, and we are fortunate today to be able to provide recertification training, initial certification training, and even a limited amount of one on one tutoring type services.

For the past decade, I have been blessed and very fortunate to be a big part of our training programs. The training has allowed me to meet many of you, and on a daily basis, I learn as much or more from all of you than I could ever hope to pass along to other people in our field. In recent years, new technology has entered into many training programs. I'm certainly not against technology or moving forward, but I do hope we never lose that personal interaction which promotes the relationships that allow us to more readily help one another.

With that said, I admit that I am NOT the most technologically advanced. In social settings when discussing new technologies my darling wife often says, "if you need a field plowed ask Jamie, he hasn't learned to stand upright yet and his dragging knuckles do an excellent job!" Cruel....maybe, true...YES! One of my goals in life is to become more efficient and effective with the multitude of things that computers, smart phones, and tablets can do to make life easier.

So, as Operations Specialists, would you rather NETWORK with your peers in a traditional classroom environment, or would you prefer to NET WORK with things like on-line training, webinars, and other distance learning type activities? In this highly opinionated era in which we live, I have to ask, why can't we have it both ways? I personally believe that each method has its place, and we should foster and promote both activities.

Being just a tad bit "old school", I do believe in classroom training. Classroom training allows your NYRWA to locate and schedule knowledgeable speakers to present on topics of their expertise, and to one on one answer the many questions which

generally arise based on the material covered. I conduct many sessions each year myself, and I truly enjoy the questions and interaction. In many cases, in depth questions and discussions take place during break periods or lunch. Most of all, I enjoy listening and learning from the discussions between Operations Specialists during these periods. The networking of personnel and peers in our industry at classroom training sessions can't be duplicated by any other means. The relationships built and the contacts made are what make it all worthwhile. As long as our amazing Associate Members, NYRWA Staff, and Regulatory Officials are willing to provide classroom style training, then we will continue to do so.

However, "Net Working" style educational activities also have many advantages. For instance, a lesson such as a new regulation or regulatory update, intended to reach a vast number of people over a large geographical area can easily be accomplished utilizing a webinar. Online training can allow Operations Specialists to learn at their own pace on a specific topic, and can also be a great tool for preparatory work for an upcoming exam. These technologies have advanced over recent years and are often broken down into segments with question and answer sessions available at the end of each segment. Most importantly in my mind, webinars can be archived so they can be viewed again as a refresher at a later date, and many online classes allow participants to complete short sections, save their work, and return at a later date to complete the course. The convenience of web based or online style sessions are very important to many of our fellow Operations Specialists.

So, which training is more effective? I think that depends on the person. I fully believe that both serve a valuable purpose. Perhaps us older folk prefer the classroom, while the younger generation is more in tune with the technology. My best friend, my father, always used to tell me the only stupid people in life are the ones who think they have nothing to learn. Words I've always tried to live by! So, if we all continue to push ourselves to not only learn, but also to share our knowledge, we will all continue to provide....

Quality on Tap!!! 💧💧