

AN OPEN LETTER TO MY FELLOW OPERATORS...

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WHAT ABOUT OUR CONFERENCE?

In the last few years I have heard several comments and questions about various items dealing with our conferences. I have tried to answer these to the best of my ability but it is hard to give complete answers in the minute or two among 400 people. So let me try this-

In dealing with location - The original idea for conference location was always to move it around the state (in the rural areas, not NYC). We did extremely well with that up until the last few years. We started having issues as our operator member base grew. So when we were at 200 operators, location was not an extreme problem. Today we see between 300 - 400 operators, over 200 vendors and engineers, and a handful of various others.

Isn't it great that our association is growing!

Now for those of us that are still reading this and doing the math, we need 600 + beds, food, and at least 4 conference rooms. WOW! We have outgrown most of the places we used to go. I for one am not complaining. I love talking to all my fellow operators across the state. The more the merrier! So, anyway, our options are starting to become limited.

We can fit in Lake Placid (sometimes 3 hotels), Saratoga, Niagara Falls, and Turning Stone. Our options have become that limited. It is hard to believe that our small friendly organization has become this big.

So let's talk price. It is on everyone's mind. Saratoga is 25% higher than everyone else. Coffee is \$68.52/ gallon! We also pay 3 times the meeting room fee (\$14,000 as compared to Turning Stone at \$0) due to the fact that it is a civic center we also have to pay a guard, 38% taxes on food, with a host of other small stuff that soon adds up. We have mostly good reviews from you but it just costs so much to go there. In our efforts to cut the conference cost so that more operators can go, we have decided that Saratoga has gone above what our operators are willing to pay. We will stay in contact with them to verify their numerous charges, but will look elsewhere.

When we go to the far west - Niagara Falls (Adams-Mark can no longer fit us) we lose 30% of our overall attendance. We have the same amount of vendors, just less operators. Who is the cheapest? You guessed it! Turning Stone. The coffee is \$38.23/ gallon. We drink a lot of coffee. I had a lot of issues with the thought of going to Turning Stone but most of what I envisioned never materialized.

Operators chose classes. Must be those darned credit hours. There always seems a need for them, after all where can you go to pick up 12 - 16 dual credit hours in one sitting?

So, speaking of sitting, I am tired of going to class for that final morning. Most of us leave early. So let's fix this. Next year we will start Monday morning and finish Wednesday afternoon, saving one night of lodging. We will try it and see what you think.

Now ladies and gentlemen, we have to discuss food. There is not one conference that has had perfect grades of the food. We do the best we can but all of our tastes are a little different and remember we are feeding 600 people not 6. There is a huge difference. We will never make everyone happy on this issue. I will still complain now and again but it will not change the fact they make the pancakes with 50 lbs. of flour in a batch.

Let's talk training!

We have excelled on the training topics! Please keep your suggestions coming! If you can think of something that you want to see please let us know. We have such a wide knowledge base that we can reach out to.... Please, please let us know. We will always cover DOH & DEC updates but we are constantly looking for technical training that fits you. The Board has seen so many comments on how great these classes have been. The staff shall continue to find the most educational training there is, but it needs to pertain to you! This association is all about you, the operators after all.

This year's favorites, according to you were, lead & copper, ethics, excavation safety, comptroller's office, and meeting other operators in an informal setting.

One last word, do not forget our vendors. Where can we go and do one stop shopping for what we do? The last time I checked there is no Walmart for water specialists. Our vendors give so much of their time and money to educate you. Please thank them for their time and dedication to this annual technical conference. Thank you. 💧💧