



OB-SO-LETE

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"Mr. Romney Wordsworth; the State deems you ob-so-lete!" Does anyone remember that 1961 episode of *The Twilight Zone* entitled "The Obsolete Man"? Romney Wordsworth is a librarian in a futuristic society where the "State" determines one's personal and professional worthiness. In this episode the "State" finds a librarian is no longer a relevant occupation and therefore rules him and his occupation obsolete. Obviously that's just a TV show. It couldn't happen in real life. Right?

Have you ever heard someone say "the plant runs itself"? Have you yourself ever uttered those same blasphemous words? With SCADA, artificial intelligence (AI) and all the other remote monitoring and automated treatment programs, it certainly seems like they are trying to make operators obsolete. A computer, the cloud and/or whatever they call it, monitors some parameters and makes adjustments automatically. Little if any operator attention is required. What could possibly go wrong?

How often have you driven up to the gate of your plant and, as you get out of your truck, notice that something just isn't right. A slight odor or a different noise. You know right then and there that you have a problem. Can AI detect that odor and know what it indicates and what adjustments should be made in order to stave off an upset? I think not. Can AI look under the microscope and determine the health of your process? Can AI perform routine maintenance activities, unclog a pump or reset a breaker? Not in its contract.

Now, more than ever, we rely on the skill and dedication of our water and wastewater professionals. At the time of this writing, the Covid 19 pandemic is raging. The cyber networks that carry AI into our lives are becoming overloaded, slowing down, and in some cases, crashing. Our water and wastewater professionals are rising to the occasion and keeping our water and environment safe. Knowing the idiosyncrasies of their facilities, having the knowledge to know what changes need to be made when as well as the skill to manually operate the facility (if needed) is invaluable. Their skill and knowledge of operations and maintenance are keeping our facilities in compliance with federal and state permit requirements. These professionals are proving, day after day, that they are truly the water and wastewater systems' most valuable asset.

The State and Federal Government have deemed water and wastewater services as essential. The professionals that operate and maintain these services have been deemed "Essential

Personnel". Thank all of you for your dedication to providing Quality on Tap and Protecting Our Environment, even in these most difficult times. It is our commitment and our profession. Mr. Romney Wordsworth, you may be considered obsolete, but you, our water and wastewater professionals, are ESSENTIAL! 💧💧