



News and Views from the Public Service Commission of West Virginia, West Virginia Board of Risk Management, and West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection

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Don't Fall Victim to a Utility Scam

By Charlotte R. Lane, Chairman, Public Service Commission of West Virginia

The Public Service Commission recently observed National Utility Scam Awareness Week by warning customers how to recognize and avoid utility scams.



Many scammers see the current pandemic as a perfect opportunity to take advantage of people. Unfortunately, too many have fallen for these scams in recent months. Customers have received phone calls or emails with convincing graphics stating that a utility has made operational changes during the COVID pandemic or that utility employees are working from home, requiring them to call a different number to reach the company. Scammers may say an account is past due, that the customer needs to pay the cost of a meter upgrade or that a recent payment was not received and needs to be made immediately. Scammers will often threaten to shut off service and demand payment by cash or a prepaid debit card. Customers should not believe them.

There have even been accounts of people in fake utility company uniforms going door-to-door, claiming they are responding to reports that scammers are in the neighborhood. Customers should not let these people into their home. And they should not use a phone number on a business card given at the door. Rather, customers should check for a utility company issued employee ID and then call the utility on the number that is on their bill and ask the utility representative to verify whether that employee is authorized to be at the home.

A scammer may also ask for personal information. Customers should never give a Social Security number, bank account number, or credit card number to anyone who initiates contact with them. That is a gateway to identity theft.

Remember, scammers only want one thing –money. They can be very clever and convincing. Once the money is gone, it's gone for good.

If customers suspect they have been targeted by a scammer, they should contact the utility first, using the contact information on your bill, then report the activity to law enforcement. Please share this information with your customers, friends and family and stay safe.

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Please Note:

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2021 Public Service Commission Seminars

By Stephen Edens, Utilities Analyst, Water and Wastewater Division, Public Service Commission of West Virginia

The Water and Wastewater Division of the Public Service Commission of West Virginia (PSC) has scheduled nine seminars for 2021 to be held at various locations in West Virginia.

The courses qualify for Continuing Education Hour (CEH) credits. Brochures will be emailed and/or mailed in advance of the seminars. The brochures contain all the pertinent information, along with registration instructions. If your physical address or email address has changed, or you now have an email address, please email the updated information to Nancy Tincher at ntincher@psc.state.wv.us or call her toll free at 1-800-344-5113, ext. 440.

A brief summary of each seminar scheduled for 2021 is noted below:

PSD Board Member Seminar – The schedule includes two sessions for the year. Although mandatory (WV Code §16-13A-3) to be taken within six months of PSD board appointment, the course can also serve as a refresher for existing PSD board members and is open to other personnel when seating is available. The seminar is sponsored by the Public Service Commission, the Bureau for Public Health and the Department of Environmental Protection, with other invited speakers. Topics include such subjects as financial management, project funding, municipal bond commission services, risk management, asset management, PSC Rules and regulations and employee relations.

Managing Employees to Avoid Legal Conflict Seminar – This course is geared towards supervisors, managers, council members and board members who have reporting personnel. The course includes such topics as hiring, discipline, discharge, civil rights, employee evaluations, training, policies, wage and hour issues and where to go for assistance.

New Seminar: Utility Rules and Operations Seminar – The schedule includes three sessions for the year. This seminar is geared towards office workers and managers, especially those with customer contact. The PSC Rules are covered, using situational examples common to the day-to-day operations of the business office, including terminations and office calculations such as pro-rated bills, leak adjustments, deposit refunds, etc. An explanation of the utility's tariff will cover various provisions and charges with sample calculations of bills and minimum usages. Processing liens for delinquent bills is also covered in the seminar.

Safety Seminar – The schedule includes two sessions for the year. The course includes information on excavation and trenching, confined spaces, fall protection, material handling, etc. This seminar is geared primarily towards field personnel and management. The course offers credit hours required for operators.

Municipal and Association Seminar – This seminar is similar to the PSD Board Seminar, but is designed for discussion of laws and procedures pertaining to municipalities and associations. This seminar is geared towards mayors, city council members, board members and utility personnel.

2021 Water & Wastewater Division Seminar Schedule	Date	Location	Site
PSD Board Members Seminar	April 8-10	Bridgeport	Best Western Plus
Managing Employees to Avoid Legal Conflict Seminar	April 27	Charleston	PSC
Utility Rules and Operations Seminar	May 13	Morgantown	Morgantown Utility Board
Safety Seminar	June 23	Morgantown	Morgantown Utility Board
Utility Rules and Operations Seminar	July 13	Beckley	Tamarack
Municipal and Association Seminar	August 3-4	South Charleston	Holiday Inn & Suites
PSD Board Members Seminar	September 16-18	South Charleston	Holiday Inn & Suites
Utility Rules and Operations Seminar	October 14	Sutton	Rural Emergency Trauma Institute
Safety Seminar	December 7	Sutton	Rural Emergency Trauma Institute

There is a maximum number of participants that are allowed for each course, so early registration is encouraged. You may register for these classes in the next several months by going to the PSC website: www.psc.state.wv.us/scripts/SeminarRegistration/seminarlist.cfm.

If this is your first time registering for a seminar on our website, you must first create an account by using the Seminar Link: (www.psc.state.wv.us/scripts/SeminarRegistration/LoginSeminarRegistration.cfm), and then follow the prompts. This is something that is done one time. Select your utility, complete the New User Form and click “Submit.” After receiving the confirmation email, you must click the link in the email to confirm that you provided a valid email address. Please keep in mind when registering on-line, each participant must use a unique email address and no more than one utility employee can register under the same utility’s email address.

Once your registration is processed, you will receive an email confirming your registration. If the class is full, you may click “Waiting List” and follow the instructions. You will then be contacted if space becomes available.

Please also note that if you need to cancel your registration for a course, go to the PSC website as noted above and click “Cancel” and follow instructions. All cancellations must be completed online and within three days of the seminar. Verbal and email cancellations are not acceptable. Utilities will be billed at the rate of \$100 for each participant who does not cancel according to the guidelines, including no-shows on the day of the seminar.

Seminars provide a valuable way to gain knowledge and to interact with other utilities. There is no cost to attend any of the seminars sponsored by the PSC. Travel, lodging and other related expenses are the responsibility of the attendee. If you have any problems associated with registering for the seminars, please contact Nancy Tincher at ntincher@psc.state.wv.us or 1-800-344-5113, ext. 440.

It should be noted, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous seminars had to be canceled during 2020. So please be aware that 2021 seminar dates may be rescheduled or canceled due to the current health pandemic. If any scheduled seminars are unable to be held at the designated locations due to the health crisis, a Virtual Seminar may be held as a substitute. Notices will be posted on the Commission's website and registered attendees will be notified of any changes and or cancellations.

CWSRF Project Priority List Applications Due Soon!

By John P. Giroir, CWSRF Community Development Manager, West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection

The Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) has started the Project Priority List (PPL) application process for the fiscal year 2022. As funds become harder to find, your placement on the PPL becomes more and more important. As it states in CWSRF's Intended Use Plan (IUP), the PPL is developed using fact sheets received from the applicant, consulting engineer or other representative, and should reflect current costs. It also states that the CWSRF will commit funds to projects in the order of their priority list position and on a first come, first serve basis.

If you are resubmitting, it is very important that your priority list application is up to date, so please take time to update any information that has changed since the last submission. Please remember to attach the required supporting documentation, including any orders that your PSD/municipality may be under. New applications are always welcome. If you have any question, please feel free to contact John Giroir at john.giroir@wv.gov or 304-926-0499 ext. 43836.



The FY2022 Memo regarding the application and the FY2022 application itself can be found at: <https://dep.wv.gov/WWE/programs/SRF>. It is in PDF format and is a fillable (you can type answers) form. If you enter information that way, please email the document to us to save time and potential errors.

Project Priority List (PPL) Applications should be submitted by December 31, 2020; however, CWSRF will accept them through January 15, 2021.

If you are not seeking funding with the CWSRF, it is not necessary to send us an application or have a place on the priority list. Also, the application should be submitted if you believe that your project will close on financing between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022. If you are unsure, it is better to submit an application to be ready for the possibility rather than having to go through the process after the deadline, which will be more difficult and time-consuming for everyone.

Please review the funding opportunities that can be found in our CWSRF Intended Use Plan (IUP), which can be found at: <https://dep.wv.gov/WWE/programs/SRF>. Or contact us directly for more information. We at the CWSRF wish everyone a very safe and happy holiday season!

The Importance of Handwashing

By Kimberly Hensley, Risk & Insurance Analyst II, West Virginia Board of Risk & Insurance Management

Germs are everywhere. They can get on your hands and items you touch throughout the day. Handwashing is one of the best ways to protect you and others from getting sick and spreading germs to those around you.

The spreading of germs can make you sick. Germs can spread with unwashed hands when touching your face, specifically your mouth, nose and eyes. We often touch our face without realizing it. Handwashing with soap is recommended to help prevent illness. Studies have shown that handwashing can significantly reduce the risk of infections, such as a cold or the flu.

The following are key times when you should wash your hands:

- During food preparation
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- Before and after tending to a wound
- After using the bathroom
- After changing diapers
- After blowing your nose, sneezing or coughing
- After tending to or petting an animal
- After touching garbage



There are five steps to effective handwashing:

1. Wet hands with clean water
2. Lather hands with soap by rubbing hands together
3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds
4. Rinse hands with clean water
5. Dry hands with a clean towel or air dry them

If you don't have access to soap and clean water, a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol is a good alternative. However, soap and water is the best method of washing hands. Hand sanitizer doesn't get rid of all types of germs, therefore it may not be effective on soiled hands and may not remove harmful chemicals.

There are three steps to effectively using hand sanitizer:

1. Apply the product to the palm of one hand
2. Rub hands together
3. Rub the hand sanitizer together all over hands for 20 seconds (until dry)

Handwashing should be a part of proper hygiene in your everyday life. It is especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Resource: CDC.gov

O&M Expenses and Project Planning

By Jim Spurlock, Technical Analyst Associate, Engineering Division, Public Service Commission of West Virginia

Detailed recording of operation and maintenance expenses is, naturally, a vital element of a smooth-running and efficient utility. It lends itself to good accounting and can help to identify and support the need for rate adjustments. Thorough and organized maintenance records also provide a reference for management, office and field staff to work together in planning and problem solving, identifying operational needs and providing continued reliable and affordable service.

Another, and perhaps less obvious, area where good O&M records come into play is in project planning. Staff at the PSC has a first-hand vantage point for this when reviewing applications for certificates of convenience and necessity.

From the moment of a project's conception, these records can assist the utility's engineer in making recommendations that prioritize the system's needs, solve operational problems and maximize efficiency.



The PSC looks for detailed estimates of changes in O&M that will result from a project. With good records to work with, the engineer is better able to provide detailed calculations and a more accurate estimate of changes. This, in turn, will help to determine the appropriate changes in rates.

Detailed calculations with a basis of good records will reduce requests for further information by PSC staff in a certificate filing. If requests are still made, the information requested can be more easily produced. Further, it becomes less likely that staff will recommend adjustments to the calculations, which could impact proposed rates. Good O&M records can even help to support the need for a project. So, from beginning to end, a project can be aided by the operational records that precede it.

Tapper Says:



Are You Meeting Your Bond Requirements?

Are you meeting your bond requirements (required debt service payments, primary reserve funding, renewal and replacement reserve funding and debt service coverage requirements)? If not, you should be taking steps to timely address these deficiencies so they do not adversely affect your operations or eligibility for future project funding.

If you have questions, contact a member of the Public Service Commission's Water and Wastewater Division.

Public Service Commission of West Virginia

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