Equipment Manufacturer for WTP's and WWTP's Finds Ways to Help with Their Customers' and the Industry's Broader Concerns

Chlorine Containment News™ – Reported independently as Catalytic Objective Synthesis™*

Having decided that its commitment to serving the water industry as an equipment manufacturer means more than just developing hardware and software proposals and fulfilling them, TGO Technologies has sought input from its customers on how they are dealing with overarching industry concerns, and how the company can help, as a supplying manufacturer.

One concern being investigated, by this manufacturer of secondary containment vessels for gas cylinders, is coping with the widely acknowledged situation of aging plant management and workers. These personnel have typically stayed at their places of employment for many years, with their average tenure noted in one recent study,[1] by the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), to be the highest among all industries, and there is deep concern about how

they are to be effectively replaced with knowledgeable and trained new personnel.

So far in its ongoing investigation, the company has learned about some things about what is already being done by plant management to address the aging workforce challenge; how the design of TGO's equipment and its on-site training in its use can help; and how a special partnership with the American Waterworks Association (AWWA) may address the problem.

PLANT MANAGEMENT OBSERVATIONS

"As long as the equipment information is effectively passed on, there shouldn't be any problems for new people," noted Alex Mares, the water utilities supervisor for Lake Havasu City, AZ. "Meanwhile, overall, our city is looking at optimizing training programs to get new guys interested in plant operations, including

drawing them from our own distribution system crews, toward getting them interested in training for whole-plant operations."

Another manager noted how the design of the containment vessels, and the manufacturer's training in their use, can help.

"Training for this equipment is pretty straightforward; we just need to have somebody with experience on site when we are changing out the chlorine cylinders," summarized Mike Holloway, chief operator for the Walnut Creek Special Utility District in Lake Bridgeport, TX.

"It's not a long process to learn," he continued. "We don't need six months to train somebody. It shouldn't take more than 4 changeouts to learn it well."

FURTHER INITIATIVES

More sharing of information among utilities on how they are coping with the aging workforce challenge can certainly help, as can further attention from manufacturers on simplifying equipment design, and increased participation in scholarship initiatives. But other actions can help as well.

More high school outreach might be especially promising. One study,[2] by The Princeton Review, says that the most popular college majors among youth today are computer science, communications, and political science, because they are regarded as offering the best prospects for advancement, and the highest salaries. Another study,[3] by the BLS, says that the information industry's workforce is already more than five years younger than the water industry's.

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The water industry can certainly offer prospects for employment and opportunities for advancement, as increasing population increases needs for plant personnel. The students electing their major based on the "hot" trends may want to reconsider looking into the water industry.

FOOTNOTES

[1] https://www.bls.gov/news.release/tenure.t05.htm
[2] https://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/top-ten-college-majors
[3] https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat18b.htm

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