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# Managing the Magnificents

Experiences, successes, and failures seeking compliance  
among 'operators'

Silver Falls Training

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*By J. MacPherson and Joe Carlson*



DRINKING WATER SERVICES  
Public Health Division

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# The presentation format: Outline

- Personal examples from a rogue engineer
- The experts say...
- Tie the expert views to the stories we covered (if time)

# Presentation Format

- Real world examples presented in stages
- You provide ideas for responses per stage
- I provide what happened next “in reality” and set the next stage
- You provide “even better if...” ideas on the “reality,” then your ideas about the next stage
- I provide the reality of next stage
- And onward until we finish that story
- Then we go to a new story and repeat this process
- Review what some experts say
- Time permitting, reflect on the stories based on our wisdom and experts views

# My Qualification on Interpersonal Relationships?

- Curmudgeon
- Documented curmudgeon, ask my family
- Practicing curmudgeon
- So why listen to a curmudgeon?
- DON'T !
- Think for yourself, listen, observe, plan...
- Act...be a “happy camper” = Merriam-Webster antonym for curmudgeon



# Personal Experiences

- Rink Creek...2010 – the stage: a regulatory problem...shocking!  
“The City of Coquille (City) has been working to resolve their disinfection by-product (DBP) maximum contaminant level (MCL) violations, described in more detail below. I’m aware Rink Creek Water District (WD) is very familiar with this DBP problem as a purchaser of City water. I understand the frustration that arises from purchasing water that has a problem, and the financial and logistical barriers to finding other options for water.

While the state database has formerly shown the required DBP monitoring as once per year, the database was in error and monitoring should be quarterly. Your cooperation with quarterly DBP monitoring will bring the WD into monitoring compliance, as well as help prove the efficacy of the City’s changes. The WD is obliged by law to sample and analyze for DBPs on a quarterly basis until results show less frequent monitoring is justified. A justification for monitoring reduction may occur, but without data it cannot be granted. Please keep in mind this monitoring will ensure there is no excessive DBP formation in the WD itself that results in an MCL violation.”

# Personal Example #1

- The stages:
  - RC requested state attend an **evening** council meeting on DBPs
  - I brought their County regulator to the meeting
  - The greeting at the door was beyond description. First there was shock, then shouting, then disrespectful words. RC said there would be no meeting with the County regulator present.
  - Not knowing the history, I chose to be humble
  - I expressed concern and empathy
  - Ushered in, first topic...Chair challenges DBP rule validity
  - I agree with his view...and review the rule requirements
  - ...for which I have no option
  - Next day response from Chair

# Personal Example #1-Term Response

Disinfection By-Product (DBP) Monitoring Samples			
Sample	Sample	TTHM (mg/L)	HAA5 (mg/L)
ID	Date	MCL = 0.080	MCL = 0.060
<a href="#">708240401-D</a>	8/24/2017	0.0416	0.0366
<a href="#">509020501-D</a>	8/31/2015	0.0797	0.0169
<a href="#">408210701-D</a>	8/20/2014	0.0634	0.0342
<a href="#">311140501</a>	11/13/2013	0.0202	0.0114
<a href="#">304231001-D</a>	4/22/2013	0.0082	0.0093
<a href="#">211141201-D</a>	11/13/2012	0.0369	0.0286
<a href="#">106291301-D</a>	6/28/2011	0.0217	0.01
<a href="#">808210801</a>	8/20/2008	0.148	0.052

The best  
apology  
is changed  
behavior.

# Example #2 (CWS on SW) – 1,300 pop

- No ordinance or enabling authority
- Annual summary report not issued
- Testing records not current
- No operations and maintenance manual
- Emergency response plan not completed
- Master plan not current ( $\geq 300$  con.)
- Annual CCR not submitted
- No coliform sampling plan
- No protocol for under-certified operator
- Monitoring not current
- Chlorine not measured & recorded as required
- No means to adequately determine disinfection contact time under peak flow and minimum storage conditions
- No cross connection control specialist (CWS  $\geq 300$  connections)
- Other Finished Water Storage (leaking)
- System pressure < 20 psi
- Turbidimeters not calibrated per manufacturer or at least quarterly

Operator doesn't care  
for documenting,  
recording, writing...he  
just wants to get the job  
done and done well.





(Enter) DEPARTMENT (ALL CAPS)  
(Enter) Division or Office (Mixed Case)

# Example #2

- What would you do during survey?
- Sympathized with the burden of all that record keeping and documentation (asked about what he did previously).
- Pointed out various things that were being done well.
- Value of docs...How does system run when he is on vacation?
- Pointed out something could come up in his life that would keep him away from the PWS...and then what?
- Ideally the documentation would be such that an “idiot like me” could walk in the door and keep the system running. What can I suggest?
- Advised him to take up the tasks one at a time, don't expect the first draft to be perfect (improve over the years). Will send templates.
- 2016 WSS: 3 defs - chlorine not meas & rec as req; roof access not watertight; no screened vent



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## Example #3

Operators experienced,  
knowledgeable, confident,  
historically successful,  
computerized, data logging...



65 people, 22 connections,  
plentiful surface water, remote

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# Example #3

Violation	<a href="#">Auto-</a>	Monitoring Period		Facility	<a href="#">Analyte</a>	Violation Type - Analyte Count	Enforcement Action - Date	<a href="#">Points</a>
Number	<a href="#">RTC?</a>	<a href="#">Begin</a>	<a href="#">End</a>	ID	<a href="#">Group</a>	<a href="#">Show analytes for all violations</a>	<a href="#">Show history</a>	
903410061	Y	1-Dec-17	31-Dec-17	WTP-A	SWTR	<a href="#">Monthly SW Report - Late/Nonreporting - 3 Show analytes</a>		1
903410054	N	1-Nov-17	30-Nov-17	WTP-A	SWTR	<a href="#">Turbidity Standards Not Met (Max NTU) - 1 Show a</a>	Public Notice Required - Dec 29,	10
903410053	N	1-Nov-17	30-Nov-17	WTP-A	SWTR	<a href="#">Turbidity Standards Not Met (95% NTU) - 1 Show a</a>	Public Notice Required - Dec 29,	10
903410057	N	12-Nov-17	25-Nov-17	SRC-AA	LT2	<a href="#">Raw Source Monitoring Late/Nonreporting - 1 Show analyte</a>		1
903410058	N	29-Oct-17	11-Nov-17	SRC-AA	LT2	<a href="#">Raw Source Monitoring Late/Nonreporting - 1 Show analyte</a>		1
903410055	N	15-Oct-17	28-Oct-17	SRC-AA	LT2	<a href="#">Raw Source Monitoring Late/Nonreporting - 1 Show analyte</a>		1
903410056	N	1-Oct-17	14-Oct-17	SRC-AA	LT2	<a href="#">Raw Source Monitoring Late/Nonreporting - 1 Show analyte</a>		1
903410052	Y	1-Oct-17	31-Oct-17		TCR	Routine Coliform - Did Not Report ANY - 1	Returned To Compliance - Nov 09	1
903410051	Y	1-Aug-17	31-Aug-17	WTP-A	SWTR	<a href="#">Monthly SW Report - Late/Nonreporting - 3 Show a</a>	Returned To Compliance - Oct 10	1
903410048	Y	1-Jun-17	30-Jun-17	WTP-A	SWTR	<a href="#">Monthly SW Report - Late/Nonreporting - 3 Show a</a>	Returned To Compliance - Aug 04	1
903410045	Y	1-Apr-17	30-Apr-17	WTP-A	SWTR	<a href="#">Monthly SW Report - Late/Nonreporting - 3 Show a</a>	Returned To Compliance - Jun 05	1
903410042	Y	1-Feb-17	28-Feb-17	WTP-A	SWTR	<a href="#">Monthly SW Report - Late/Nonreporting - 3 Show a</a>	Returned To Compliance - Apr 10	1
903410039	N	1-Oct-16	31-Oct-16		TCR	Acute MCL for E. coli - 1	Returned To Compliance - Apr 27	10
903410038	Y	1-Jul-16	31-Jul-16	WTP-A	SWTR	<a href="#">Monthly SW Report - Late/Nonreporting - 3 Show a</a>	Returned To Compliance - Sep 06	1
903410035	Y	1-Jun-16	30-Jun-16	WTP-A	SWTR	<a href="#">Monthly SW Report - Late/Nonreporting - 3 Show a</a>	Returned To Compliance - Sep 06	1
903410028	N	1-Mar-15	31-Mar-15	WTP-A	SWTR	<a href="#">Failure to Meet CT - 1 Show analyte</a>	Returned To Compliance - Jul 24,	10
903410029	N	1-Feb-15	28-Feb-15	WTP-A	SWTR	<a href="#">Failure to Meet CT - 1 Show analyte</a>	Returned To Compliance - Jul 24,	10
903410027	N	1-Jan-15	31-Jan-15		SWTR	<a href="#">Public Notice Late/Nonreporting (Viol # 903410025)</a>	Returned To Compliance - Jul 24,	1
903410025	N	1-Jan-15	31-Jan-15	WTP-A	SWTR	<a href="#">Failure to Meet CT - 1 Show analyte</a>	Returned To Compliance - Jul 24,	10
903410026	N	1-Dec-14	31-Dec-14		SWTR	<a href="#">Public Notice Late/Nonreporting (Viol # 903410023)</a>	Returned To Compliance - Jul 24,	1
903410023	N	1-Dec-14	31-Dec-14	WTP-A	SWTR	<a href="#">Failure to Meet CT - 1 Show analyte</a>	Returned To Compliance - Jul 24,	10
903410024	N	1-Sep-14	30-Sep-14		SWTR	<a href="#">Public Notice Late/Nonreporting (Viol # 903410019)</a>	Returned To Compliance - Nov 21	1
903410019	N	1-Sep-14	30-Sep-14	WTP-A	SWTR	<a href="#">Failure to Meet CT - 1 Show analyte</a>	Returned To Compliance - Jul 24,	10
903410015	Y	1-Jun-13	30-Jun-13		TCR	Routine Coliform - Did Not Report ANY - 1	Returned To Compliance - Jul 12,	1

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# Example #3

- Ground water has 100 to 2000 ppb arsenic
- Disdainful of DWS 'expertise'
- Operator(s) has dragged feet correcting deficiencies
- Active operator had stroke in Sept 2016  *E. coli*
- Operators are done...tired and retired. No one else interested or experienced. Difficulty just getting board members.





# Example #4

- Spring source; County reg asked state to eval source on site visit
- Spring is a spring
- Spring box is another thing
- Pipe in stream channel
- Box in stream w valves
- Explanation vague
- Pipes are irrigation type
- No treatment
- 1<sup>st</sup> 2008 *E. coli*+ (no repeat)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010 TC+ (no repeat)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> 2010 *E. coli*+ (no repeat)



# Example #4

- Customer complains about water quality causing illness
- Operator denies complaint accuracy
- Operator unilaterally decides to add chlorination
- Initiates plan review April 2014 proposing using one of two unpowered chlorination units, “A” or “B,” using calcium hypochlorite
- One of the two units is not certified to Std 61, conditional approval provided on certified unit
- Operator submits product “C” (not certified), repeatedly asks for OK
- Operator asks me to provide “the answer,” which I cannot
- Operator finds cert unit “D.” I say OK. Couple months pass...
- Operator says PWS
- Multiple comms to so
- Operator asks in May





# Example #5

- SW, owner-built treatment (roughing filter, settling basin, pressure sand, slow sand, cartridge, UV, hypochlorite)
- 5 significant deficiencies: >1 NTU, PN, no PR, O&M doc, tracer
- One slow sand filter (Blue Futures), Pura UVBB
- 11 RVs
- Boil notice in 2008
- Public notice missing
- Enforcement action (paid w change)
- Boil Notice 2010
- Owner hands off job to residents



# Example #5

- A small improvement in 2011
- Owner/operator absent for long periods
- More small improvements in 2012, 2013, 2014
- Owner has son draw schematic for improvements
- Owner sends relative as 'operator'
- Relative/operator hires resident
- Co-owner tries to manage from California
- Boil lifted in 2016?
- Relative asks how to not be a PWS (<10 people)
- Kicks out most residents
- Inactive

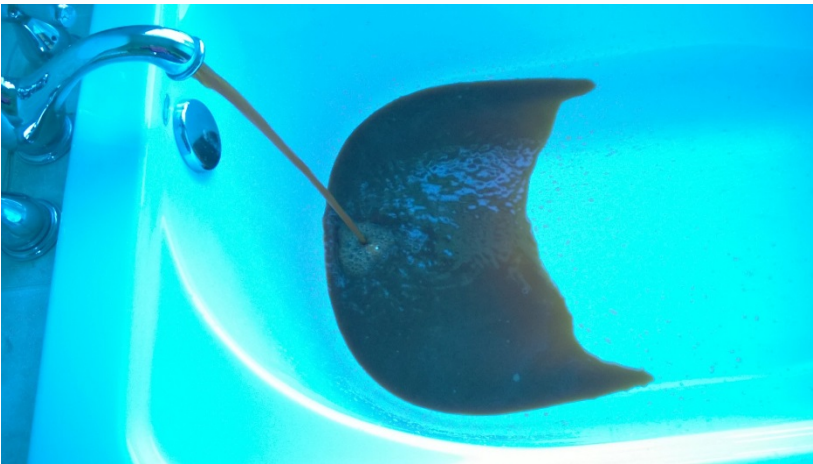
# Example #6

- Operator adds to system without plan review
- Operator submits PR information that is incomplete
- Operator sends PR information for one project that includes information for unassociated projects



# Example #7

- Operator is a resident
- Operator has a landscaping business
- Wells drop production in summer, pump iron-laden water
- City water connection \$5 to \$10 M
- Numerous phone conversations, options



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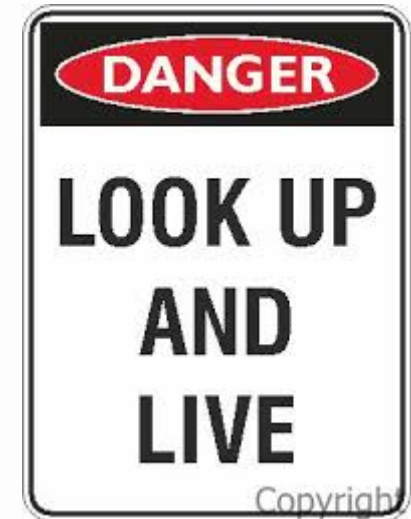
## Example #7



# My Danger Signs



- Feeling anger toward operator, owner (obvious one)
- Highly colorful personalities & very deadpan ones
- Operator asking for promises
- Operator contradicts self (esp. if within an hour's time)
- Operator not making sense (wait...)
- Operator tries to give gifts
- A previously difficult operator gets overly friendly



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# The experts say...(slide 1 of 4)

- Listen.
- Stay calm.
- Don't judge.
- Reflect respect and dignity toward the other person.
- Look for the hidden need, **their motivation(s)**, empathize.
- Look for others around you who might be able to help.
- Don't demand compliance.
- Saying, "I understand," usually makes things worse.
- Avoid smiling unless they smile.
- Don't act defensively or return anger with anger.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/living-the-questions/201503/20-expert-tactics-dealing-difficult-people>

Feelings are much like waves, we can't stop them from coming but we can choose which one to surf.

# The experts say... (slide 2 of 4)

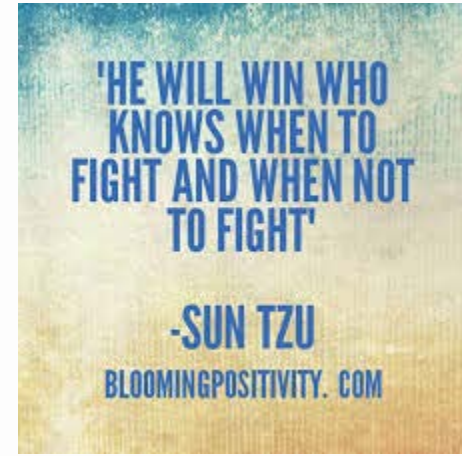
- Don't argue or try to convince the other person of anything.
- Keep extra space between you and the other person.
- "I'm sorry" or "I'm going to try to fix this" may defuse the situation.
- Set limits and boundaries.
- Trust your instincts.
- One response does not fit all.
- Debrief with someone.
- Discharge your own stress.
- Give yourself credit for getting through an uncomfortable situation.





# What experts say...(slide 3 of 4)

- Keep your cool.
- Shift from being reactive to proactive
- Pick your battles
- Separate the person from the issue
- “Has [PWS name] given clear thought to the implications of this choice?”
- “If you treat me with disrespect, I’m not going to talk with you anymore. Is that what you want?”
- Appropriate humor.
- If they are stuck on a “what’s wrong is...” track, change the topic.



# What experts say...Scott Crabtree (slide 4 of 4)

- People are complex
- We can not control each other
- For working with a negative person...
  - You will catch some negativity unless consciously feeding yourself positive attitude.
  - Bringing some gentle positivity may leak some onto the curmudgeon
  - Watch for their being open to influence from gentle positivity, feed it
- Like an oxygen mask on airplane, 1<sup>st</sup> take care of yourself
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Y-3gSQYTFs>



# Interpersonal Relationships are Key...but no Guarantee

- Strive to be respectful
- Mentally put yourself in their shoes
- Acknowledge attributes displaying good work, dedication, effort, innovation, creativity, efficiency
- State that which is non-compliant as a matter-of-fact.  
...thoughts, experiences, anything new today?

