

OPERATOR DIGEST

SPRING 2022 | NUMBER 152



Quarterly Magazine of the
Environmental Operators
Certification Program – BC/Yukon

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with the aftermath
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OPERATOR DIGEST

The **Operator Digest** is the official magazine of the **Environmental Operators Certification Program**.

Submissions for publication in the Digest are welcome. Please email them to the EOCP office at eocp@eocp.ca

Changes of address, annual dues, Continuing Education Requirements, exam applications, as well as general enquiries about the program should be addressed to:

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OPERATOR PROFILE

Omas Aghoghovwia

CWP, City of Surrey

How did you become an Operator?

Growing up in Nigeria, I understood the importance of water in nature's cycle of life. Be it at home, school or hospitals, water is an essential part of a community. I think this gravitated me towards working with water. Before working as an operator, I was employed as a labourer. To meet the requirements of the certification, I worked and accumulated hours. Later, took a couple of classes and was trained with 'in-house' duties required for water distribution system. A few weeks later, I achieved my certification as an Operator for water distribution systems.

How long have you been an operator?

I have been working as an operator for 6 years.

What are your core functions?

As a dedicated individual, I would always make sure to finish the task provided by the end of the day. My core values include working with utmost professionalism at any given assignment.

What is your typical day? Part of the day includes installation of water meters, checking the pressure of fire hydrants and locating underground utilities. The other part of the day could involve assisting supervisors in determining the materials and equipment required and the workforce needed for installation of water service connections to the community.



What do you most enjoy about the work?

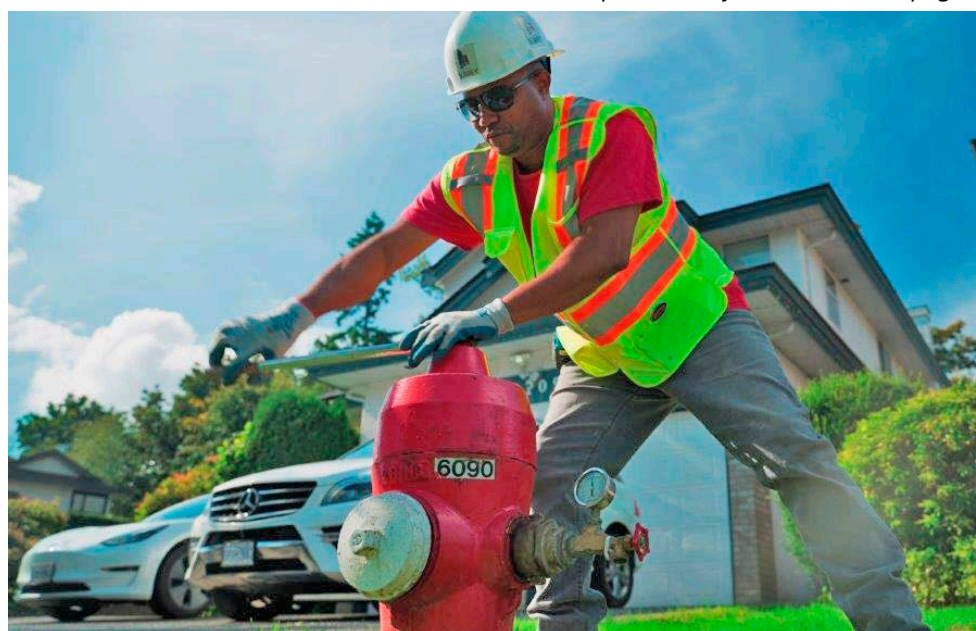
Serving my community with safe and drinking water is one of the most enjoyable aspects of the job. Unlike a usual office environment, I really appreciate working outdoors with the beautiful nature and fresh air. I also enjoy meeting and working along with people from different diversities and cultures.

What are some challenges you face?

Since the job involves providing services to community, dealing with a tough resident could be challenging. Managing such a resident is a tricky part of the job as they could be non cooperative.

Can you speak of any highlight in the past year? I value working as an essential worker during pandemic and I am glad to be serving my community when it needs us the most. A non supportive resident can always make the job difficult. But I think the interesting part of serving communities is facing and managing residents of such kind.

'Operator Profile' continued on page 6



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTORS AND STAFF



Through the past two years, we have managed to adapt and continue to provide all services and even embark on several different initiatives at the EOCP. Here is an update on some of these initiatives:

1. We are working on a project with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs to collect data on demographics of Operators. Along with this, we are holding our annual 'check and update draw' whereby you log into the Customer Relationship manager (CRM) and check your contact information, update it as necessary, complete the demographics questions, and you are then entered into a draw to win an iPad!

2. Part of the project with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs is related to our Competency Framework which has now been validated, and an online assessment tool has been developed. It is anticipated that this tool, which can be accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/EOCP-Competency-Assessment> will be useful to determine which competencies:

- you need to develop for an additional certification you wish to pursue;
- one of your team members needs to develop for a new or additional certification;
- are needed by someone from a related field who wishes to become an Operator;
- are needed by a newcomer to Canada with foreign credentials who wishes to become an Operator.

3. Our 'Operator on the Job' video series is almost complete. The four videos completed to date are available at <https://tinyurl.com/OperatorOnTheJob>



Chris Lawrence

4. We are encouraged to see so many of you using the CWP and CWWP designations. These, representing Certified Water Operator and Certified Wastewater Operator, are owned by the EOCP, and are for use by EOCP's certified Operators who hold certifications in SWS, SWWS, WT, WD, WWC, and WWT.

5. This issue of the Operator Digest also includes an article on the response related to the flooding in Merritt. Operators were essential to get the water and wastewater systems functioning enabling the residents of Merritt to return to their homes. Many lessons were learned when dealing with this emergency, and it also showed the level of teamwork and resilience of our Environmental Operators. We thank everyone for their assistance and have embarked on a project to evaluate options to enable a more expedient response in the event of a future similar emergency.

6. Work also continues on our 2022 Conference, #EOCP2022, with the theme 'Respond - Recover - Thrive'.



Kalpna Solanki

This conference will be in a hybrid format that can be attended in Vancouver as well as online. Registration will open on the 1st of May and can be accessed here: <https://tinyurl.com/EOCP2022>. As with the conference in 2021, there will be three streams:

- Water
- Wastewater
- Leadership

7. We will soon be sending out emails for speaker submissions, as well nomination forms for:

- Operator of the Year
- Innovation
- Corporate Recognition
- Outstanding Student

We look forward to seeing you at #EOCP2022!

Chris Lawrence, Chair
Kalpna Solanki, President and CEO

SAVE THE DATE
EOCP's Conference is on
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Chris Harms, Dale Ross, and Rick Hiebert at the Burns Lake Water Treatment Plant

WATER QUALITY MAJOR DRIVER FOR THE VILLAGE OF BURNS LAKE WATER TREATMENT PLANT

By Chris Lawrence, CWP

Meeting water quality Maximum Acceptable Concentrations (MAC) and Aesthetic Objectives (AO) outlined in the Canadian Drinking Water Guidelines isn't always easy, especially in small northern communities.

The new pumps distribute treated water from a below floor slab, 160,000 L tank, through the Village and up to two- 1.6 million L reservoirs



Located 230 km Northwest of Prince George, the Village of Burns Lake is one of those communities that managed to stay ahead of the curve. Also supplying potable water to Ts'il Kaz Koh First Nation and Lake Babine Nation, the water system sources its water from the only available aquifer in the area via three deep groundwater wells. The Village acted proactively to the rumored changes to manganese in the Canadian Drinking Water Guideline to include an MAC of .12 mg/l in 2019. A Water Treatment Plant was proposed that would effectively lower manganese levels and (as an added bonus) lower arsenic levels, even though these levels did not exceed the MAC at the time.

Construction of the facility began in the summer of 2019 and was commissioned in the Spring of 2021. The project was the result of the successful grant application with the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. The project was funded through grants that covered 73.33% of construction and the remainder of the costs were split: 50% to the Village of Burns Lake and 50% to the Ts'il Kaz Koh First Nation and Lake Babine Nation. Within smaller communities, and especially those in the north, leveraging funds is challenging. Many communities lack heavy industrial and commercial tax bases to afford these types of projects without grant funding or long-term borrowing.

The construction started with upgrades of the well-sites and included the installation of three groundwater well pitless adapters, closure of three below-grade wellhead chambers, installation of three submersible well pumps and motors, and the installation of 105 m of 200 mm raw water supply pipe. From there the raw water enters the 286 m² post-disaster steel Water Treatment building complete with 125 mm R 34 wall panels and 150 mm thick R 43 roof panels including electrical, mechanical, heating, heat recovery ventilation, communications, SCADA, plumbing, and safety equipment.



4 biological treatment vessels and associated process and backwash valves and piping

The process inside the Water Treatment Plant starts with the removal of arsenic and manganese. This is accomplished by two 2.0 m diameter ferric chloride assisted arsenic removal filters, two ferric chloride chemical dosing systems and two 2.0 m diameter biological manganese removal filters. The filters have a 122 m³. below-grade concrete backwash water holding tank, two backwash water discharge pumps, and 195 m of 100 mm diameter backwash water forcemain.

After arsenic and manganese levels have been lowered, sodium hypochlorite is introduced via chemical dosing systems. To achieve contact time, treated water enters a 100 m³ below-grade

concrete chlorine contact chamber then moves to a 60 m³ below-grade concrete clear well. From there the water is ready for the distribution system with a total plant treatment capacity of 35 L/s (555 US GPM) 3,025 m³/day (800,000 US gal/day). The end of the project included the construction of watermain extension for future development within Ts'il Kaz Koh First Nation lands.

Dale Ross, Director of Public Works for the Village of Burns Lake shared that the project was interesting and rewarding being able to provide clean and safe drinking water to the entire community and neighbouring nations.

Outside view of the newly constructed Burns Lake Water Treatment Plant



'Operator Profile' continued from page 2

What do you advise do you have on how to have a successful career as an Operator? As an operator, I strongly believe in maintaining a positive attitude towards the job. Anyone who wishes to pursue a successful career in water distribution System must understand the value of time spent towards achieving the certification. Make sure to always ask questions and when in doubt, follow instructions and directions from your supervisor/mentor.

What do you do when you aren't working?

As the job involves physically working in outdoors, when I am not working, I usually relax by spending quality time with my wife and kids. I occasionally enjoy walking / running outdoors, reading a book or even take a dip in the summer waters.

What else can you tell us about working as an Environmental Operator?

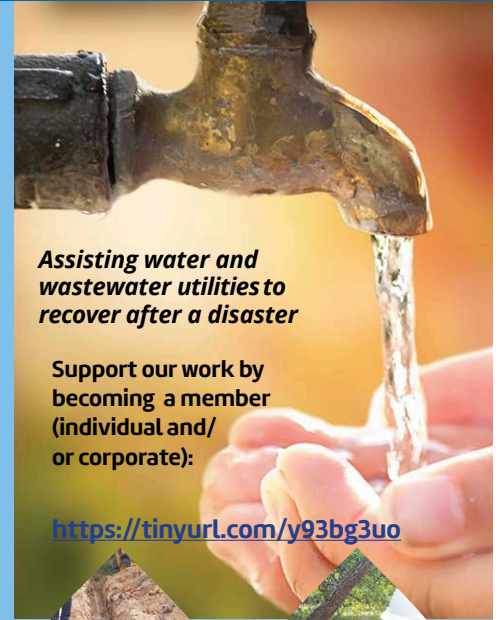
The environmental industry is a fast-growing field with multiple opportunities to work at. Working as an Environmental Operator involves constant learning as the industry is upgrading continuously. Adapting quickly to different techniques and aspects helps me to appreciate the job better.

Whom would you recognize as a mentor? In a field of facing challenging scenarios everyday, I believe a mentor plays a major role in shaping your ideas as an Operator. Doug Henling, a retired operator, would be the mentor who helped me climb my path smoothly.

Anything else you would like to add? Coming to Canada, getting my certification and working as a Water Distribution Operator makes me feel great. I appreciate the job and income security that comes along with the position. Lastly, 'Ame Akwa' means Water is life in my native tongue and that is my everyday motto towards the job.



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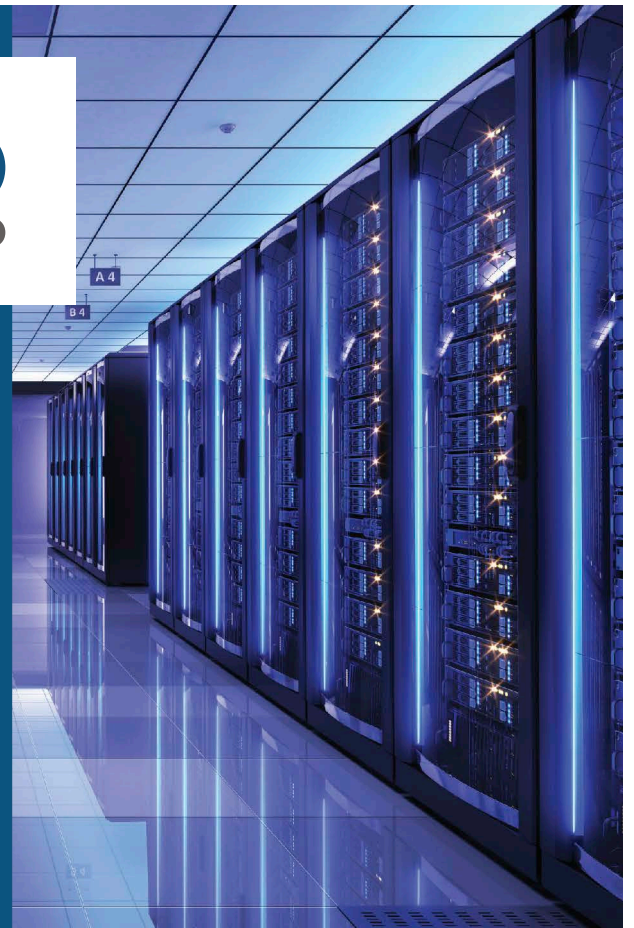
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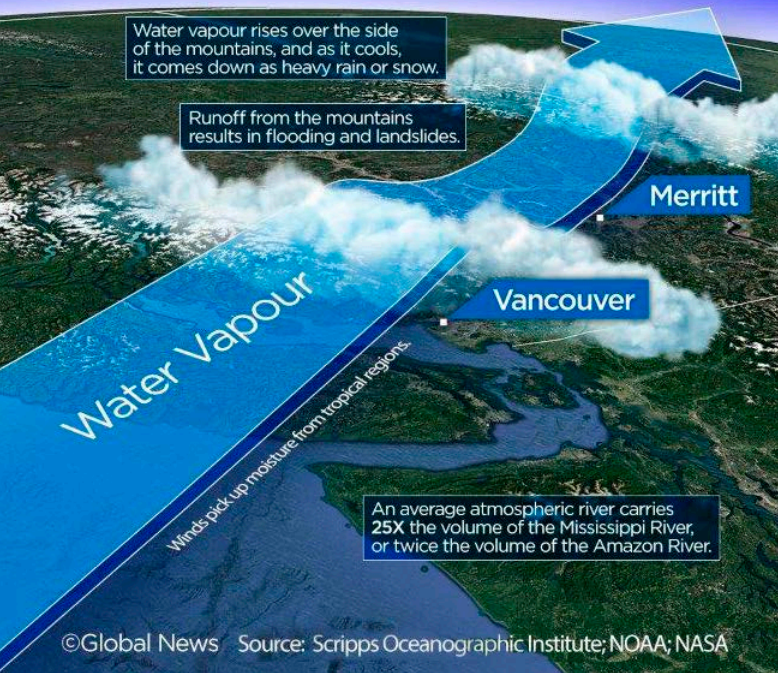
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PANDEMIC, FIRES AND THEN

A 'River in the Sky'

Atmospheric rivers are giant bands of water vapour in the sky. They are, on average, 800 kilometres wide, and several hundred kilometres long.



Floodwaters overwhelm the the city of Merritt's Wastewater Treatment Facility



FLOODS

By Kalpna Solanki CPHI(C) BSc MBA

I am immensely grateful to the Operators from the cities of Merritt and Kelowna for giving me a first-hand account of their experience in dealing with the aftermath of the floods that had a severe impact on the city of Merritt. This is their story. They are the heroes.

When the atmospheric river hit BC coast on the 14th of November 2021, the Coldwater River rose to unprecedented levels, breached its banks ahead of the designed spillway, and flooded the city of Merritt. Normally, the river flows are around 25 m³/s flood levels but in this case, they peaked at 750 m³/s. The level of the river normally is around 1.197 m but this time, at peak were 3.473 m – the water levels went up 2.276 m! This resulted in Merritt losing all its infrastructure for water and wastewater systems, overloading of the wastewater treatment facility and losing all infiltration basins, with raw wastewater running into the river. In addition, there was a major break in the water distribution system resulting in the loss of all water from one reservoir. Fortunately, the other two reservoirs were isolated before they lost any water. As if that wasn't bad enough, the flood water also flooded Merritt's two pumphouses - Voght pumphouse and GE pumphouse.

How was the assistance deployed?

In the instance of Kamloops, the request was from the CAO of Merritt to the CAO of Kamloops to provide support. In the instance of Kelowna, the recommendation was from staff to senior

Coldwater Avenue sinkhole exposed a gas line which needed to be supported



Neighbouring municipalities provided support

It was all hands on deck with Merritt's own 21 workers as well as staff from:

Kamloops Crew and Equipment – 15

- 2 supervisors
- 3 Operators for the treatment plant
- 6 utilities workers to install valves and fix leaks
- 4 CCTV and flushing Operators

Kelowna Crew – 12

- 4 WWTP Operators
- 8 Utilities workers (flushing and repairs)

Black Mountain Irrigation

- 5 Utilities workers (flushing)

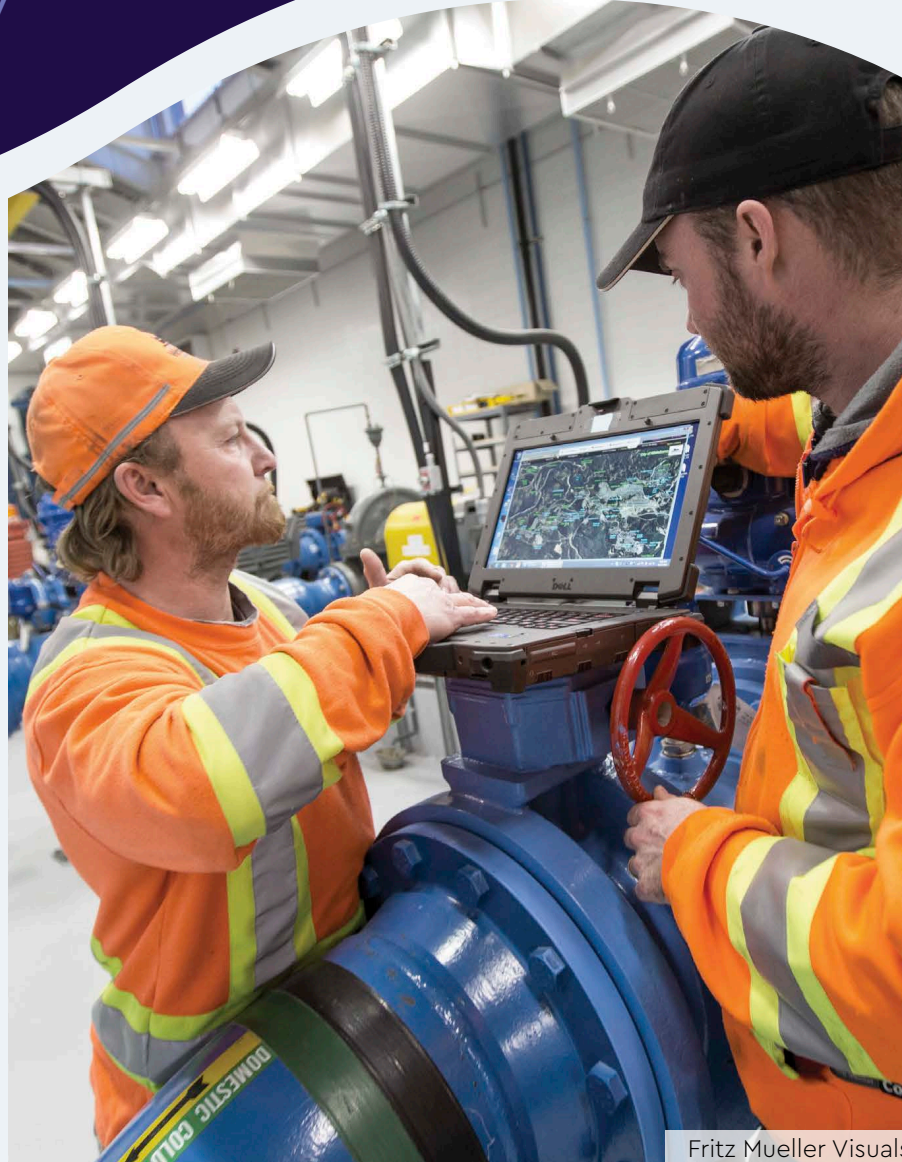
Logan Lake

- 2 Utilities workers (flushing)
- Retired supervisors – 2 (Utilities and Shop supervisors)

CGL Contracting – Full crew

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Fritz Mueller Visual

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Left to right:
Tom Harrington
Utilities Supervisor
Trista Selby
Equipment Operator 2

Kevin Vilac Chief Water
and Wastewater supervisor
Jess Sulz Parks Supervisor/
Water and Wastewater
Operator 2

Ryan Peck Water and
Wastewater Operator 2
Missing: **Jeremy Long**
Water and Wastewater
Operator 2



*Pine Street washout exposing wastewater
collection system*

management that the city should provide support and senior management then paved the way to deploy a team to Merritt.

Staff member selection

The selection was primarily due to staff member's expertise with water and wastewater – but this was the first time they were deployed to deal with this type of emergency. Despite not knowing what challenges they were going to face, they had a great deal of industry experience and volunteered for these roles.

Crews worked in tandem

The Merritt crew knew its systems the best and was tasked to protect and keep all major infrastructure running, which included:

- Supervising visiting crews and cleaning of plant
- directional flushing
- isolation of potable water zones from contaminated zones
- repair of wastewater systems
- installation of new infrastructure
- fixing and repairing breaks
- locating and turning off all water services in affected areas (over 300 services)
- turning on all water pumps
- chlorinating and de-chlorinating final effluent, and river monitoring
- 24-hour shift in WWTP for four months

The Kamloops crew worked on fixing and installing dead-end blow-offs and

installing main valves to control and repair the water system. The Kamloops CCTV crew flushed and camera sewer lines in the affected zones

Working together, the Kelowna and Kamloops wastewater treatment crew worked on cleaning and putting the treatment plant operational again

Again, working together, Kelowna, Logan Lake, and Black Mountain Irrigation District crews worked on directional flushing of the whole water system

CGL Contracting installed valves, repaired a block of sewer line, and capped and installed blow offs

Equipment and supplies were brought in

Kamloops – backhoe, excavator, dump truck, vac truck, CCTV truck, two service vehicles

Kelowna – four service vehicles

Logan Lake – one service vehicle

Black Mountain Irrigation District - two service vehicles

Also, the following:

- 4" repair clamp – Kamloops installed on Grimmer St
- 6" repair clamp – CGL installed on Armstrong Street
- 6" coupler and pipe – Kelowna installed on Voght Street
- 14" valve Kamloops crew install on Priest Avenue

- 12" valve CGL installed on Nicola Avenue
- 12" tee with two valves CGL installed at Pooley Avenue and Houston Street
- 14" cap with 2" blow off installed by Kamloops at Aspen Planners mill yard by Coldwater River
- 12" cap with 2" blow off install by Kamloops on Voght Street south side of bridge
- 6" cap install on Pine St installed by CGL
- 8" sewer balls to plug sewer mains on Pine Street

CGL also installed new sewer services and a main line on Canford Avenue and built the road back to grade.

The city of Merritt had to repair a manhole on Coldwater Avenue that created a large sinkhole that collapsed near a 4" gas main. Also needing repair was a 14" sewer main on Coldwater Avenue filled with rock and silt and had a 100% blockage.

Other equipment included PPE, winches, confined space, valve keys, hoses, wrenches, metal detectors, chlorine testers, etc.

Some lessons were learned...

It became apparent that having accurate and updated maps and GIS systems are essential.

- Crews had a difficult time finding where valves and main line were located. Over the years there wasn't much updating of maps and valves, and even mains were moved and no records were kept.



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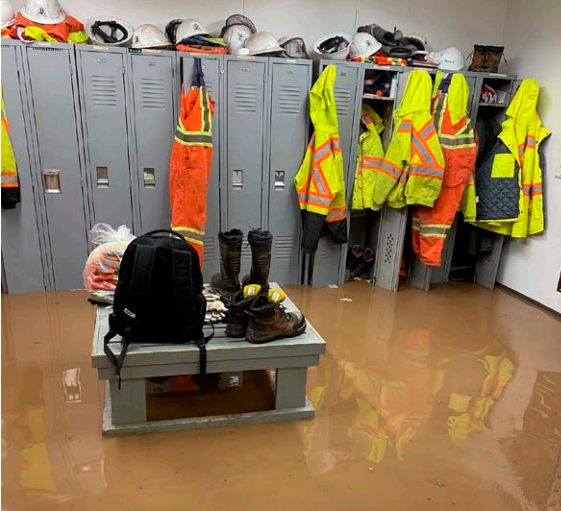
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Inside the Public Works building



Trees Trailer Park



Exposed 350mm water main

- Some valves had been forgotten and were now under asphalt. This is essential for the local crew, and even more important for those without knowledge of the system.
- Several valves did not shut off completely, and hydrants needed to be used to isolate zones

Mandatory hydrant testing and maintenance is needed

- Some private hydrants did not drain and were sometimes broken. Not only do these pose a problem when there is an emergency such as the flood, but these hydrants are essentially ineffective if there is a fire

Location

- Should locate valves a good distance from any bridge or water crossing

Equipment

- Having on hand each size of sewer plug to stop infiltration from overloading sewer line and lift stations
- A full city directional flushing program
- Proper directional flushing equipment
- Knowing the steps to super chlorinate and load a full system from using one water pump

Staffing

- The Merritt team knows its infrastructure well
- Maintaining a good working relationship with stakeholders such as the DWO was helpful
- Good communication between team members
- Cross-trained staff can work in various areas
- Reimbursement from EMBC to supporting municipalities via Disaster Financial Assistance is essential
- Whilst there are no written Mutual Aid frameworks in place, the assistance provided by neighbouring municipalities was very effective

- The crew is dedicated and committed. No-one evacuated with their family
- This was an opportunity for crews from different cities to learn from each other
- Retired Operators can be called on to provide support
- A simple system of orange bagging valves that had been shut off was effective
- Hydrants that had been flushed were ribboned
- Staff from utilities e.g. Fortis needed to be there to support and stabilize gas lines
- Cell phones cannot be relied upon for communication. Fortunately, many had 2-way radios that could be used
- Having experienced Operators was essential. This was not the time to be learning operational skills
- Keep staff and roles consistent to reduce confusion

What could be done better?

- Communication**
 - Determine what is needed
 - Direct contact with staff at site prior to departure
 - Designation of a 'lead' person in the affected community for each of the disciplines – WT, WD, WWC, WWT
 - Emphasis on safety procedures (OH&S)
- Identification of response team**
 - Trained
 - Roles identified
- Accurate mapping**
- Awareness of 'Safety First' with proper safety equipment such as life jackets, ropes, tripods, PPE, etc.**
- Planning**
 - Processes to protect main infrastructure
 - Have a way to contain and dewater around all pumps and treatment plant
 - Plans in place for a major infrastructure failure

- Planning and engineers need to interact with the people who know the system
- Improved knowledge of water and wastewater operations by those in EOC for each city
- Better communication on appropriate time for residents to come back as some residents were coming back while large scale flushing was occurring
- SOPs to deal with issues such as valve closures
- Better tracking of time and pay
- Processes in place for food and accommodation (for local crew as well as those assisting)
- Debrief including all involved after the event
- Identification of a safety coordinator
- Tailgate meetings on a regular basis

Is there a role for the EOCP?

- Expansion of Operator Peer Network database to include skillset of Operators**
- Development of an emergency plan**
- Assembling of appropriate teams**
- Training on Incident Command Systems for team leads**
- Assist with debrief after each event to ensure better preparedness for future events**

In addition to the pandemic, 2021 brought the wrath of fires and floods and tested the mettle of our Operators. With these weather events becoming more frequent and more extreme, it is apparent that we need to be better prepared. In my role as a Founding Director of Operators Without Borders and overseeing establishment of the OWB Volunteer Database, and also having undergone Incident Command System training, I know we can do more to be better prepared. Stay tuned for more updates on this.

BOARD ELECTIONS

The EOCP's Nominations Committee is pleased to present the candidates for the 2022 Board Elections. Three Directors are needed as per the EOCP's Constitution and Bylaws. Please visit <https://eocp.ca/> to find out more about each of our candidates.

Voting will begin at 7:30 a.m. on the 19th of April and will end at 11:59 p.m. on the 25th of May.

Successful candidates will be announced to the membership at the EOCP's AGM which will take place at 11:00 a.m. on the 16th of June.

Please note that only EOCP certified Operators are eligible to vote. To vote, please use the link sent to you in your email and vote via the Customer Relationship Manager.

Two positions are to be filled by members who are EOCP certified Operators.



a. Mike Firlotte - Acclaimed



b. Chris Ford - Acclaimed

One position is to be filled by a person who advises or has advised in the operation or design of facilities that treat water, waste, or wastewater.



a. Natasha Cvenkel, P.Eng.



b. Lisa Thompson, P.Eng.

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WHO'S ON THE MOVE

Matt Lennox

CWP CWWP, City of Port Alberni

What was your first job? My first job was a 'pin chaser' at Old Orchard Lanes in Burnaby where I grew up. My job was mostly janitorial and fixing/resetting the pin setting machines when they got jammed or weren't working properly.

What was your path to becoming an Operator? My first public works related job was as a 'summer labourer' for the Corporation of Delta where I was assigned to the water department. That is where my passion for a career in the utilities field began. The more knowledge I gained, the more I knew that this was the right path for me. I found the whole process of the delivery of potable water and the collection of wastewater and all of the processes associated with both to be quite fascinating and so much more complex than one would think.

How did you pivot from your last position to your current one? During my 10+ years with Westbank First Nation I had advanced to the position of Utilities Supervisor, this was during a time of significant growth not only for WFN but for the Okanagan in general. Our utilities crew was involved in and responsible for the significant infrastructure expansion that facilitated the growth that you continue to see in the region today.

I was then recruited to take a management position in the private sector with a large Canadian valve manufacturer/distributor but after a few years in the private sector I began to miss the challenges associated with the everyday variety of work in utilities and public works and I began looking for opportunities to return to the utilities management field.

That is what got me to my current position with the City of Port Alberni.

What advice would you give to someone who is currently an Operator or considering becoming one? Never stop learning! This is such an exciting field to be in and there are so many 'specialties' in this field! In waterworks alone there are so many different areas to be involved, from water treatment, distribution, construction, PRVs, pump maintenance, metering, cross-connection control, water quality.... I could go on and on because there are truly that many 'specialties' in this field. In some smaller utilities you might be involved in all of these areas whereas in a larger utility you might be just involved in one or two of these, find something that interests you and never stop learning about it. Always be open to new ideas and ways to do things, 5+5=10 but so does 6+4, 7+3, etc.; what I'm saying is learn five different ways that work to do a task, one might be useful in one situation where another is ideal in a different situation. The more tools that you have in your toolbox the better equipped you are to handle a situation.

What are some of your goals in your new position? Port Alberni is poised for significant growth in the coming years. I would like to bring the experience that I have gained in the past to help with this growth. We have an amazing crew of passionate and dedicated people who take great pride in their work and their community, I am very excited to be part of this team and want to do my part to contribute to its growth and development.

What has the impact of COVID-19 been on your organization? It's probably easier to say what hasn't been affected and the answer is nothing.



Procurement is probably the biggest thing, not only are prices for materials/supplies continuing to rise significantly, but also availability. What was once 'off the shelf' items are now backordered and it is not uncommon to have delivery dates 6 months to 1 year away. This makes scheduling everyday tasks as well as capital projects very challenging.

What do you do in your spare time? If it's not raining you will probably find me on one of my motorcycles, I love to ride and explore this beautiful province that we live in. It is not uncommon for me to do a several hundred kilometer ride in a day. Other than that, you will probably find me in the garage, tinkering.

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 **EOCP** HYBRID
CONFERENCE
Designed for Operators, by Operators

12TH TO 14TH SEPTEMBER 2022
(Vancouver BC or Online)

Response

Recover

Thrive

COMMENTS FROM THE 2021 CONFERENCE

"I learned a lot today."

"Good information. Well done EOCP team!"

"I liked being able to choose my path."

Small Systems, Water, Wastewater, Leadership

For more information, check out <https://eocp.ca/eocp-conference/>

STATISTICS

1st January to 31st March 2022



EOCP

Environmental Operators
Certification Program

EXAM STATISTICS



289 exams
taken

93 exam
sessions

FACILITIES



57 facilities
re/classified

CONTINUING EDUCATION UNITS (CEUs)

771 Operators
submitted CEUs

1,750 CEUs were
earned

DEFINITIONS

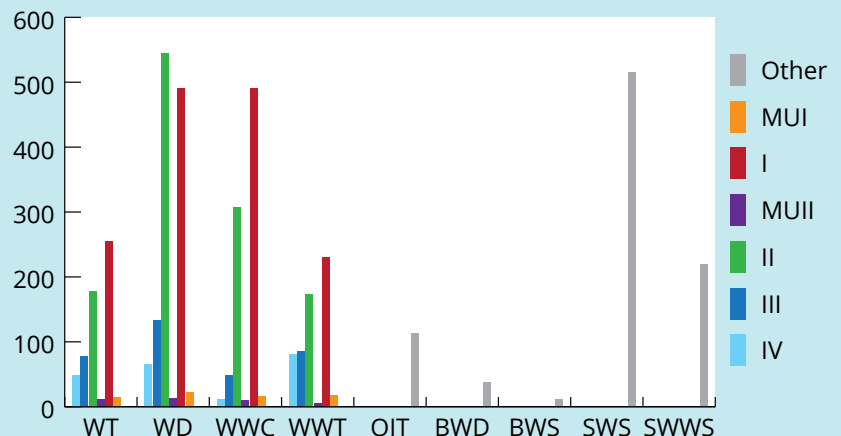
WT	Water Treatment
WD	Water Distribution
WWC	Wastewater Collection
WWT	Wastewater Treatment
OIT	Operator In Training
BWD	Bulk Water Delivery
BWS	Building Water System
SWS	Small Water System
SWWS	Small Wastewater System
MU	Multi Utility

1 January 2022 was the start of a new CEU reporting period. If you haven't submitted your CEUs for the 2020 - 2021 reporting period yet please add them to your profile or email them to eocp@eocp.ca as soon as possible.

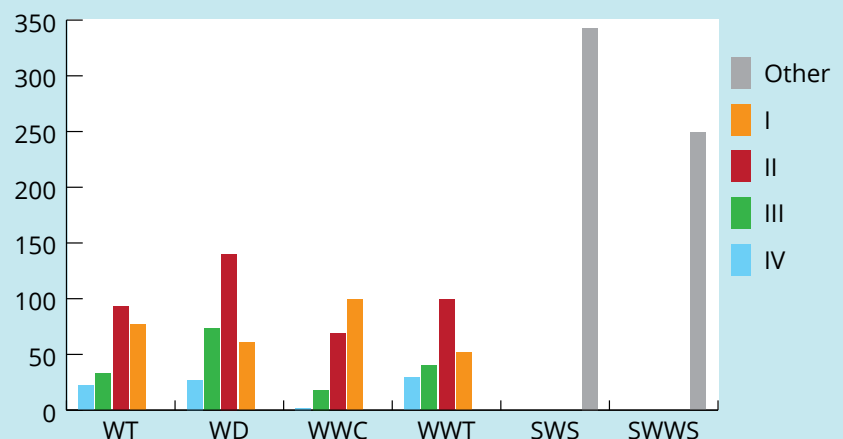
Check your Operator status by logging into your profile at <https://crm.eocp.ca/> and clicking on **ACCOUNT** to see if your 2022 dues have been paid, and **CEU** under the **LEARNING STATUS** tab to see if your CEUs have been met.

If your CEUs have not been met for the 2020 - 2021 reporting period, and/or your dues haven't been paid, your status will be red flagged and you will be listed as not certified. You must be certified to vote in the EOCP Board election, voting opens April 19th.

Operator Certification



Facility Classification



WATER & WASTEWATER OPERATOR TRAINING

**CLASSROOM OR INSTRUCTOR LED
VIRTUAL TRAINING**

Certification courses
support new ABC criteria

**MTS Maintenance
Training Systems Inc**

&

**CROSS CONNECTION CONTROL
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Hire OC

Water Engineering Technology students from Okanagan College are career-ready with exceptional technical skills and training.



CONTACT US

To learn about the WET program or grads, contact aoneill@okanagan.bc.ca
Hire a co-op student! Contact coop@okanagan.bc.ca



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- The Smith-Blair 670 split coupling is capable of completing a pipe repair without having the pipe to be cut and removed to facilitate installation.
- An excellent alternative to more traditional repairs with repair clamps or a standard coupling, the Smith-Blair 670 offers an easier installation for a permanent repair!



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