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Northern Flows



Alaska's Drinking Water and Wastewater Program Newsletter
 Issue 14 • Spring 2003

Important Information



For Water and Wastewater System Operators and Owners

Northern Flows

DW/WW Program Directory

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Message from the Manager

Spring is upon us, and it seems as though the gradual change from our mild winter in South-central Alaska to spring has gone almost unnoticed. This is the first year in the past twenty years that I can remember where we did not have a "Breakup" or a wet spring. Where is the mess? We have been "bone dry" in South-central Alaska and for much of the state. Perhaps this is a sign of what the year might be like "Dry."

The new leadership at the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC): Ms. Ernesta Ballard, Commissioner; Mr. Kurt Fredriksson, Deputy Commissioner, and Ms. Kristin Ryan, Director for the Division of Environmental Health, continue to move the Department forward on finalizing its 2004 budget as well as the restructure of its Division components. The programs within the Division of Environmental Health are reviewing our statutory authorities and our regulations to assure management that we focus our limited resources on our core missions

and avoid the temptation of "mission creep." The Drinking Water and Wastewater (DW/WW) Program's primary mission is to ensure compliance of public water systems (PWS) with state drinking water regulations, federal rules, and the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act and subsequent Amendments to the Act for the public health protection of the residents and visitors of the state. Accomplishing this mission is becoming an increasing challenge for the state as well as PWS owners and operators.

The proposed Drinking Water Regulations package that we thought was going to be ready for public comment in mid January 2003 has not been released for public notice at this time. Additional internal reviews of the package with ADEC management and recent modifications to the proposed package have delayed it accordingly. It is expected that this regulation package will be ready for review shortly. At this time, we are already preparing the next Drinking Water Regulations revision package scheduled for public notice this fall 2003. This revision package will include the Lead and Copper Rule Minor Revisions, Public Notification Rule, Radionuclides Rule, and changes and updates to Analytical Methods. These new federal Rules will be adopted by reference.

For the next two to three years, the DW/WW Program will continue to revise its Drinking Water Regulations as we adopt federal rules required for primacy. During the public comment

period, please take the time to review these proposed regulations and provide meaningful comments to the department in a timely manner. You-the public- consisting of PWS owners, operators, consulting engineers, elected officials, and the general public are a part of the regulatory review and development process. Become involved if you are not already involved, because together, we can make it work better.

Over the past several months the ADEC Sanitary Survey Program has been reviewed, revised, and is proposed to be enhanced. The DW/WW Program, working cooperatively with U.S. EPA Region 10 and the Alaska Training/Technical Assistance Center (ATTAC) - University of Alaska Southeast, Sitka, have committed to a long-term technical support of the program. The new Alaska Sanitary Survey Program, with review and input by ADEC staff, has been developed by ATTAC in a similar manner as the ADEC Certified Installers Program. ADEC will provide guidance and support to ATTAC to teach sanitary survey workshops across the state. A 2-day Advanced/Refresher Sanitary Survey workshop has been developed by ATTAC to both compliment and supplement the current 4-day Basic Sanitary Survey workshop. The first in a series of these workshops were completed in April and May 2003 in Anchorage. Another series of these workshops are planned for fall 2003. The goal of the Sanitary Survey Program is to have trained

continued on page 7

This Issue

Seasonal Water Suppliers	Engineering Plan Reviews
2	3
Emergencies	Resource Corner-Alaska Training/Technical Assistance Center
6	5
Decommissioning Wells	Staff Profile
6	4

Total Coliform Monitoring for Seasonal Water Suppliers *by Linda Grantham*

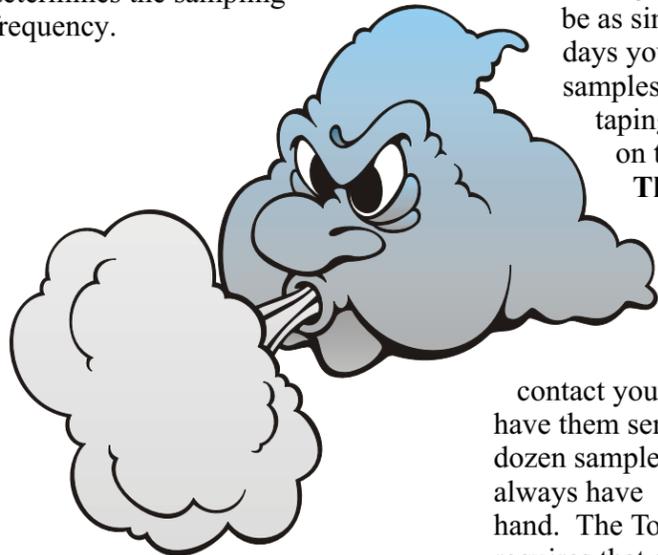
** This article is a reprint of an article in our Fall 2002 Issue #12

State and Federal drinking water regulations require routine testing for all transient non-community water systems (Class B PWS). These are systems that serve 25 or more persons per day, for at least 60 days out of the year. Many of these systems only operate for a few months during specified seasons.

Seasonal facilities have the same monitoring requirements as those who operate year round; however, the sampling requirements take on more importance for systems that have been closed down for a period of time. Systems that have been off line should devise a start-up routine that will ensure that the water system is ready to serve the public. Water lines that have been sitting for an extended period of time may be susceptible to biofilm accumulation. This is also true for systems that have had only minimal use. The start-up routine for these systems should begin with disinfecting the well and distribution system. This includes hot water heaters and water softeners. (Be sure to check with the softener's manufacturer for the correct procedure.) The most widely used routine disinfectant is regular household bleach. The amount needed is dependent on the depth of the well and the size of the water system. The complete disinfection procedure can be provided to those systems needing assistance by contacting your local DW/WW Program staff. Once the disinfectant has been flushed from the water system, a sample for Total Coliform Bacteria analysis should be collected and sent to the lab for testing. It is important to note that bleach (chlorine) used as a disinfectant may cause discoloration of the water as it oxidizes organic material and

precipitates iron. Sampling and analysis needs to be completed before the system is opened to the public and should allow for the time to deal with any unsatisfactory test results should they occur. That means time to collect and analyze more samples if necessary. Don't wait until the last minute! Be Proactive!

No one wants to start the season with a Boil Water Notice. The whole idea behind the sampling requirements is to ensure that your customers are being served safe water. The type and condition of a water system determines the sampling frequency.



the beginning of August, about midway through the current years operation. Collecting a sample at the end of the season is discouraged because you're getting information after the fact. It may keep you from getting a monitoring violation, but the object here is to ensure that the water being served to your customers is safe.

We've heard many excuses such as "I've been too busy," and "I just forgot" when we call about a missed sample. But are you too busy to make sure people don't get sick from the water you serve them? It can be as simple as marking the days you need to collect your samples on a wall calendar and taping it above your desk or on the door to your office.

The bottom line - be proactive, not reactive.

At the beginning of the season you should contact your local laboratory and have them send you at least a half a dozen sample bottles so you will always have a sample bottle on hand. The Total Coliform Rule requires that at least 4 bottles be on hand at all times. This is to ensure that you have enough containers should a routine sample test positive for total coliform bacteria and you are required to collect 4 repeat samples within 24 hours of notification.

Summer (or winter) seasons are usually quite hectic and require a lot of work to make them go smoothly. A little planning always makes those little tasks seem so much easier. So, plan ahead and have a healthy and profitable season. ~

Most Class B systems are only required to sample once per calendar quarter while the system is in operation. That usually works out to about 2 samples per year for the seasonal systems. Sampling early in the quarter is **highly** recommended. As an example, a summer seasonal operation that opens to the public the end of May or the beginning of June. The first sample needs to be collected **PRIOR TO OPENING**. The next sample should be collected in July or

Message from the Manager cont'd *by James Weise*

professionals, Sanitary Survey Inspectors, complete an onsite evaluation of a PWS to ensure that it is providing safe drinking water to its customers and to inform the PWS operator and owner of deficiencies that compromise the integrity of the PWS and the quality of its product.

A new and challenging project DW/WW Program staff are reviewing and plan to develop and implement during calendar year 2003 is "real time" access to PWS monitoring and reporting summaries. We are working on this project with U.S. EPA Region 10. Dennis Wagner, our EPA Project Officer, has been instrumental in moving this project forward by obtaining compliance funding for the State from U.S. EPA Headquarters.

"Real time" access to the ADEC DW/WW Program's database has been requested by numerous PWS owners, Alaska Rural Water Association, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium staff, and ADEC-certified laboratories over the past several years.

The ADEC DW/WW Program continues its steady flow of staff turnover. Long time staff; Keven Kleweno in the Anchorage Office and Kathleen Soga in the Juneau Office are pursuing new career opportunities. Lucio Canete has joined the DW/WW Program in the Anchorage Office. Lucio is scheduled to be finally located in the Bethel field office by mid summer 2003. Lucio will focus his efforts on the public water systems

located in the communities of the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta area. Additional DW/WW Program engineering staff positions are also planned for the Wasilla, Anchorage, and Soldotna Offices in calendar year 2003.

Enjoy this beautiful spring, and if you have any comments or questions about any articles in "Northern Flows" please don't hesitate to call me or send an E-mail to me at: james_weise@dec.state.ak.us ~

James Weise
Manager
DW/WW Program

Emergencies - Man Made or Natural Disasters - Are you ready? cont'd *by Kathy Kastens*

water if the primary source is unavailable or unusable.

Where should you start, and what do you need to think about?

Each System should have an emergency response plan. This can be a stand-alone plan or may be incorporated into your public works or local government plans. The bottom line is that the PWS operator has to have it at his fingertips. It is a plan to recover and return the system to operation. This plan should include an identified alternative source of safe drinking water if for some reason you could not use the primary source, and contact information for first responders to an emergency. Do you know who will be your first responders in an emergency? Are there Troopers, a fire department or hospital in your area? Do you have those numbers at your fingertips if you need them?

Systems need to recognize realistic emergency possibilities and what their vulnerabilities are. Is the system in an area that gets high winds, earthquakes or flooding. Are you in or near a community that may be a target for terrorist activities or more probably could you have a disgruntled ex-employee or other possible scenarios for vandalism? This assessment of possibilities can help you focus on realistic responses to possible emergencies, such as what backup equipment should you have on hand. How long will it take you to get parts?

If there is an emergency, do you know who in ADEC to contact. Do you know what other agencies you should contact to report the emergency?

Have you considered contacting your local government or local emergency planning committees about creating an emergency response plan?

If you have a plan, is it current and have you practiced it to make sure you haven't missed anything?

If you do not have the answers to these questions you need to get busy and work on an emergency response plan for your system. Contact your local ADEC office Environmental Specialist, National Rural Water Association Alaska Chapter or visit our website for information to start on your plan. ADEC DW/WW Program has grant funds in place to assist systems in understanding the importance of security and emergency response plans. Keep checking our website for information on what we will be doing in conjunction with the grant. If you have any suggestions or would like to join the workgroup that has formed to work on this issue please give me a call at (907) 269-7639 or E-mail me at kathaleen_kastens@dec.state.ak.us ~

Engineering Plan Reviews cont'd *by David Johnson*

submitted. If you have questions concerning the plan review fee, call your local DW/WW Program office to get clarification. See telephone listings on the back page.

Call the DW/WW Program plan review engineer during the design process if you have questions. Be sure to relate all pertinent information concerning your project to avoid any potential difficulties later.

If the department issues a letter requesting additional information, provide all the information requested in the letter. If there's a question regarding what is being requested, call the DW/WW Program plan review engineer for clarification.

Attend DW/WW Program or Environmental Protection Agency [EPA] training when offered. Increasingly complex rules concerning public water and wastewater systems impacts both of our organizations. Many times the training is free, and while it does take time, it provides a forum for staying current on new technologies and for gaining valuable insight into new and/or up-coming regulatory changes.

The benefit to you for ensuring that all submittals are complete and accurate is that you should experience reduced plan review turn-around times and a more predictable process. The benefit to the DW/WW Program is that our workload becomes more manageable.

The benefit to the public will be better designed water and wastewater systems that better protect public health.

In summary, the DW/WW Program simply does not have the resources to continue to review and issue lengthy plan review letters explaining the need for information that should have been included in the initial submittal.

If you have any questions or have recommendations on how to improve the engineered plan review process, do not hesitate to call me at (907) 262-5210, Extension 238, or send a letter with your recommendations, or an E-mail to me at: david_johnson@dec.state.ak.us . ~

Staff Profile - Environmental Specialist II- Fairbanks *by Cindy Christian*

Marci Irwin is an Environmental Specialist II for the Northern Drinking Water and Wastewater Program area (DW/WW Program) in the Fairbanks Office. She is responsible for a wide range of activities, including compliance assistance and enforcement for all of the Class A Non-transient non-community and Class B Transient non-community public water systems (PWS's). Marci reviews all of the non-TCR (total coliform rule) laboratory data received for public water systems to ensure the accuracy of the data and to determine compliance with various rules. She then assists with the entry of the laboratory data into the SDWIS-State Drinking Water database. This is a new database that the Drinking Water and Wastewater Program has begun using recently. Marci has been instrumental in helping the DW/WW Program accomplish a smooth transition from the previous database

using Advanced Revelations to the new SDWIS-State database. Marci is the Northern DW/WW Program area technical expert for the Lead and Copper Rule. As such, she assists PWS's in determining their requirements under the Lead and Copper Rule, such as sampling schedules, public education, and corrosion control. Marci is also responsible for reviewing waiver applications and issuing monitoring waivers to PWS's for Synthetic Organic Contaminants (SOC), Inorganic Contaminants (IOC), and asbestos. This is a very important activity because these waivers can save the PWS over \$6,000 per year in monitoring costs.

Marci is a 1991 graduate of Sterling College with a degree in Biology and Chemistry. She came to Alaska in 1993 when her sister and brother-in-law moved to Fairbanks and enticed her to come along. Prior to coming to

work for ADEC, Marci worked for six years at Northern Testing Laboratories, Inc. as a chemist and lab supervisor. She also worked for Golden Valley Electric Co-op as a Staking Technician locating where power lines are to be constructed and for the City of Breckenridge, Colorado, as a cartographer. Marci came to work for the ADEC in 2000 as an Environmental Specialist. She was interested in using her knowledge of drinking water issues and chemistry to assist public water systems in delivering safe drinking water to their customers. Over the past three years, Marci has been dedicated to ensuring that the public water systems assigned to her remain in compliance with the state drinking water regulations and protect the public health of their customers.

Marci is actively involved in many volunteer activities sponsored by her

Continued on page 5

Staff Profile - cont'd *by Cindy Christian*

church and community. She volunteers as a coach for her son, Christopher's soccer team and she teaches Sunday school for the 3-4 year old children at her church. She also volunteers as a room mother for her son's class at Fairhill Christian School. She has been involved with Youth Ministries and spent two months in Mexico City doing mission work. She is also active in the Alaska Water Wastewater Management Association and the American Water Works Association

Alaska Young Professionals Committee. Marci and her son like to spend their leisure time biking, hiking, skiing, and doing other outdoor activities. Marci is a very important member of the ADEC team, working to ensure the protection of public health by offering compliance and enforcement assistance to public water systems in the northern part of the state. ~

Resources Corner: Alaska Training Technical Assistance Center *by James Elam*

The Alaska Training/Technical Assistance Center (ATTAC) provides water and wastewater operator training, resource and training material development for water and wastewater systems, sanitary survey training, technical assistance, and research related to rural water supply and treatment. ATTAC is one of ten regional centers in the U.S. funded by a grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) Office of Water. Many of ATTAC's training courses are free of charge.

The center, located in Sitka, Alaska, is a cooperative effort involving three academic units of the University of Alaska: Sitka (UAS), Anchorage (UAA), and Fairbanks (UAF). Research on issues relating to rural water supply and treatment are being conducted by the engineering programs at UAF and UAA. ATTAC staff at UAF are addressing disinfection by-product formation and removal in Alaska's small water systems. Staff at UAA are carrying out demonstration projects to investigate, under full operating conditions, alternative and innovative drinking water treatment technologies.

ATTAC offers a well referenced website, www.uas.alaska.edu/attac, which contains many resources. Along with the basic contact information, ATTAC's site offers information on training and education across the state, including a statewide training calendar. They have a comprehensive and diverse lending library containing information resources for all levels of operators, owners, home-owners, teachers and any other interested parties. Also, the site includes information on ATTAC's ongoing research projects.

With assistance from the National Science Foundation, ATTAC has also developed a manual of 28 activities designed to help meet the needs of high school science teachers in rural Alaska. The activities in this collection include step-by-step directions for preparation and presentation. The activities are designed for rural schools and focus on village sanitation topics such as water resources, drinking water, human and household liquid waste (wastewater), solid waste (household



garbage and trash), and personal hygiene. The units are designed for high school (grades 9 - 12) science classes. Many of the activities use simple laboratory equipment and supplies normally found in high

school science labs or that are available from local sources. Where unique equipment or unusual supplies are required, sources for the supplies are listed. Most of these unique and unusual items are available in a "kit" which has been developed with assistance from the US EPA and ATTAC. The kit contains items such as pH meters, reference books, videos, posters and a variety of test kits. Kits are also available on a loan basis. The manual may be downloaded from ATTAC's website, www.uas.alaska.edu/attac.

There will also be an Environmental Science and Technology Summer Institute for High School Science Teachers put on by ATTAC to go over the manual and kit. For more information contact Nicole Duclos @ (907) 747-7756 or E-mail her at nicole.duclos@uas.alaska.edu. ~

Decommissioning Wells

by Chris Miller

As you may be aware, the Drinking Water Protection component of the Drinking Water and Wastewater Program is in the process of completing Source Water Assessments (SWA) for the 1,500+ Class A and B Public Water Systems in the State of Alaska. As we move through the state completing SWA's, we are finding that many public water systems could reduce their vulnerability by simply ensuring that drinking water wells within their Source Water Protection Area are properly grouted and unused and/or abandoned wells are properly decommissioned.

UngROUTED and abandoned wells provide a quick path for contaminants to enter groundwater supplies and contribute to the loss of confining pressure from confined aquifers. Additionally, abandoned wells pose a physical hazard at the surface. (Figure A)

Since a grouting regulation has only been

in place since 1983, any well completed prior to the regulation is likely not to be grouted. Currently, the State of Alaska requires that all new drinking water wells have at least 10 feet of continuous grout within the first 20 feet below the ground surface (18AAC 80.015). This is the minimum requirement and

it should be noted that certain subsurface conditions may warrant an alternative method for grouting a well. For example, subsurface formations that yield water of undesirable quality must be adequately sealed-off to prevent contamination of the overlying or underlying water-bearing zones. If this water-bearing layer is deeper than 20 feet, it would be appropriate to grout the well at the deeper depth.

The State of Alaska requires that wells be decommissioned using standards established by ANSI/AWWA Standard A100-97 or other methods presented to and approved by the Department of Environmental Conservation as protective to public health (18AAC 80.015)

Ensuring that all wells within your protection area are grouted and that unused and/or abandoned wells are properly decommissioned substantially reduces the vulnerability of your Public Water System's source of drinking water, and goes a long way in providing safe drinking water for years to come.

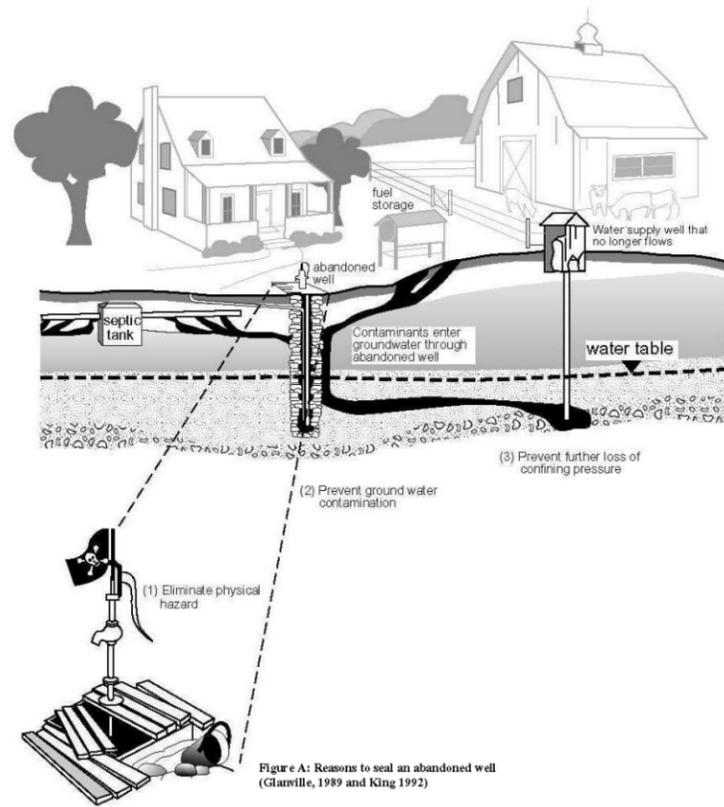


Figure A: Reasons to seal an abandoned well (Glarville, 1989 and King 1992)

Emergencies - Man Made or Natural Disasters - Are you ready? by Kathy Kastens

Alaska's Public Water Systems (PWS) need to be prepared in case of an emergency. To do that owners and operators must look at possible man-made emergencies like disgruntled employees, vandalism and yes, terrorism, the same way you recognize the possibility of natural disasters like the floods on the Kenai Peninsula or the Earthquake near Tok, over the past year. Is your system ready? Will you be able to get back up and running in

a minimum amount of time, if you're faced with an emergency? EPA requires systems that serve over 3,300 persons to complete a vulnerability assessment and a written Emergency Response Plan. However, we also know that the majority of the PWSs in the State of Alaska serve a population less than 3,300. What about small systems? Right now they are not required by EPA to do an Emergency Response Plan, but is it

still important for those systems to look into security issues and emergency response plans? YES!! ABSOLUTELY! Systems should be prepared **before** an incident or emergency. Being prepared gives everyone the best possible chance of avoiding impacting public health if an incident occurs. It's the PWS owner's responsibility to be prepared. They are required to ensure there is an alternate source of safe drinking

Continued on page 7

Engineering Plan Reviews

by David Johnson

Under 18 AAC 80 (Drinking Water regulations) and 18 AAC 72 (Wastewater Disposal regulations), the State of Alaska requires approval of engineered plans for construction or modification of all Class A and B public drinking water systems (PWS) and for most wastewater treatment and disposal systems, prior to construction. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that systems are designed by experts who know and understand the science and engineering principles on which good designs are based. The purpose and goal of the plan review and approval process is to protect surface and groundwater quality, ensure that drinking water systems provide water to their customers that is protective of public health, and to protect the environment.

The DW/WW Program currently has 8 engineering staff working in 5 separate plan review offices across the state. Collectively, these individuals have reviewed approximately 1600 engineered plans over the past year. Most projects are not simple and straightforward. In order to handle that many plans, our engineering staff need plan designers to provide assistance in the form of better and complete submittals.

The reason for these procedures is that the DW/WW Program's workload has increased dramatically over the past couple of years while our engineering staffing levels, because of budget constraints, have remained constant, or have declined.

In order to assist you in submitting complete engineered plan packages we encourage the following:

You, as the design engineer, should request a pre-design conference with the ADEC DW/WW Program engineer responsible for review of your plans. These conferences are meant to save you time by sorting out potential problems before a plan is submitted. Be prepared to discuss the details of your proposed plans,



keeping in mind that you are typically much more familiar with what you want to do, and have more specific information, than the DW/WW Program staff. Also, please keep in mind that if conclusions or decisions made during a pre-design conference are based on incomplete or inaccurate information, those conclusions may not be valid. These conferences can also help determine plan review fees and whether additional permits or approvals are required.

You should read, as a minimum, Article 2 in both 18 AAC 80 and 18 AAC 72, regarding plan submittal requirements. The most current version of the 18 AAC 72 (Wastewater Treatment and

Disposal) regulation is dated July 11, 2002, and the most current version of the 18 AAC 80 (Drinking Water) regulation is dated September 21, 2002. If you do not have current versions of the regulations, they are posted on our website at <http://www.state.ak.us/dec/title18/title18.htm>. In addition, our current "Manual for Conventional Onsite Domestic Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems", dated August 1, 2000, should be used when designing and installing conventional onsite wastewater systems serving single family and duplex residences.

Use checklists, both general and specific, when submitting a proposed project. Checklists are available from the department free of charge at your local ADEC office, and are available from our website at <http://www.state.ak.us/dec/deh/water>.

If the department requests additional information, the plan review number (if one has been assigned) needs to appear on your response. Using the plan review number will help ensure that the additional information submitted for your project is credited to the proper project. If the project name has been changed, this is the time to inform the DW/WW Program staff of the change.

Try to submit all the information associated with an engineered plan in one package, including the fee, a completed fee invoice form, identification of any waivers that may be needed, an owner's statement, and a "Domestic Wastewater System Data Sheet" if it is a wastewater submittal. At the conclusion of the project, a completed "Certification of Construction for Domestic Wastewater Systems" form (available from your local ADEC office) must also be

Continued on page 4