The Water Operator: An Unappreciated Profession

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Being a water operator is not a job. It is not a career. It is a profession. By definition, a profession is an occupation requiring specialized education. Being a water operator is a profession, which requires dedication and years of training and education. It requires long hours of work under varying conditions. Being a water operator is not a 9 to 5 job; it requires attention 24/7. It is a lifelong commitment, sometimes with little praise and much criticism.

When public water supplies and water operators are in the news, usually the impact is a negative one. You hear about the incompetent operator sentenced to jail or fined for falsifying records. Rarely, if ever, do you hear a report that is positive or one assuring the public that an operator is competent and knowledgeable to keep the drinking water supply safe.

Public water operators have the responsibility of providing safe drinking water in order to protect public health, and this makes operating a public drinking water system a serious responsibility. Water operators are held responsible for complying with all state and federal regulations, including monitoring, reporting, performing treatment techniques, record keeping, and public notice requirements. These requirements are designed to ensure consumers receive safe drinking water. The public depends on the operators of public water systems to be honest, accurate, and dependable in performing their duties.

Regulations on public water supplies are changing all the time and our operators are changing as well, becoming more capable and better equipped to handle multiple water problems. Today's operators are required to know more now than ever before. It is imperative to keep the operators we have and not take them for granted.

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Drinking water operators do more than produce water that is safe, clean and adequate in quantity. They help preserve our natural resources and help protect our watersheds. Clean water is priceless, and it's becoming harder to keep clean.

Congratulations to all the certified water operators in North Carolina! Rarely do you get the recognition you deserve. I for one recognize and appreciate what you are doing for your community and for your profession. Keep up the good work and remember if you ever need assistance, North Carolina Rural Water is just a phone call away.

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