

# TCEQ HOSTS WORKSHOPS FOR SMALL-WATER-SYSTEM PROFESSIONALS

*Training helps operators plan for the future*

Imagine that you have a 50-year-old home—in a booming area of town—where a lot of major maintenance has been deferred. Your family is growing, but your paycheck is the same. Now imagine you run a small public water system. You may have similar concerns, but on a much larger scale.

Many of these small systems, such as those serving RV parks, housing developments, and bedroom communities, are dealing with rapid growth and aging infrastructure. Some operators have the added stress of drought to deal with. How will they secure adequate water supplies? Just like our imaginary homeowner, they want to know if they can afford to make needed repairs before a crisis occurs.

Hundreds of Texas water-system owners and operators are in this situation. That's why the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality is conducting workshops on managing assets around the state specifically designed for small public water systems.

The TCEQ held five of these training sessions this spring attended by 150 public-water-system professionals, representing 108 systems in East and Central Texas and the Panhandle. Participants received continuing-education credit.



The TCEQ's Morgan Jansing takes participants through an inventory-development process step by step. She uses worksheets system staffers can download to help them plan ahead.

## From Inventory to Budgeting

To engage in long-range planning, system operators must first take an inventory of assets. Morgan Jansing, with the TCEQ's Small Business and Local Government Assistance Section, walked participants through the process of detailing all of their assets using worksheets in the [TCEQ's guide](#).

After listing assets and estimating the life span for each one, operators can create a prioritized inventory. This will help them make decisions about maintenance and replacement, and develop a budget. Like the homeowner who knows that his 15-year-old water heater will likely need replacement this year while his five-year-old air conditioning

system will not need replacing for 10–15 years, this process projects current and future needs and estimates replacement costs.

Once the inventory is completed and costs are projected, a budget is developed. The workshop showed participants how to come up with income figures based on rates and fees collected using a handy worksheet in the guide. The TCEQ connects systems with professionals who can provide financial, managerial, and technical assistance. Together they can determine the next steps to assess need and conduct a study to make sure that rates are at appropriate levels to meet needs.

Our homeowner may have parents or other resources to help out financially and



**More workshops are in the works for the fall, but operators don't have to wait for the next workshop to get their questions answered. A great deal of information is available online or by calling the Small Business and Local Government Assistance hotline during business hours at 800-447-2827.**

give advice. Likewise, public water systems also need support systems for financial assistance to fund adequate reserves for future needs.

That's why Jansing introduced participants to the [Texas Water Infrastructure Coordination Committee](#). The TWICC is a collaboration of state and federal agencies that works together to assist public water systems with compliance and infrastructure. Agencies on the committee can help system operators with technical expertise and identifying possible sources of public and private funding.

## Measuring Water to Assess Supply

Before you can ask for a raise to support your growing family and home repairs, you have to take stock of both your performance and the long-term viability of the company you work for. Small water systems have to do the same by measuring water supplies and assessing the wells and storage capabilities of the system.

Public drinking water is generally found in one of two sources—surface water or groundwater. Accurate measurement of supplies is important, especially when dealing with drought. The TCEQ's Michelle Bost gave a presentation illustrating ways to measure surface water and groundwater.

Just as in a performance review, it helps to follow best management practices and to keep good records. Trainers spent a great deal of time on methods of measurement, averaging and recording of measurements in a log, monitoring changes, and troubleshooting.

If a tree falls on the house, our homeowner is going to have to act immediately,


which may mean he has to tap into savings or come up with alternatives to address the problem. If the water table drops rapidly, a pump breaks, or evaporation dramatically outpaces rainfall, water systems have to come up with viable alternatives as well.

Bost emphasized the importance of implementing an up-to-date drought contingency plan and having other conservation measures in place to curb water use during times of shortage.

She also explained some ways that systems can increase supplies, including interconnections with other systems, drilling emergency wells, hauling water, using reclaimed water for irrigation, and desalination. She explored the associated costs, permitting requirements and time tables for each alternative.

## Workshops Meet Real Needs

Representatives of small water systems reported a variety of concerns.

 [View three small-water-system operators who explain how the workshop helped them solve real-world problems.](#)

Some were dealing with infrastructure problems, others with capacity issues due to rapid growth, and still others needed ways to impress upon funders the need for adjusting the budget to account for future needs.

The response of participants was overwhelmingly positive. Of the 150 participants, 121 of them took the time to fill out a survey about the workshops. While the needs of the individual systems varied, all appreciated the discussion on asset management and [tools](#) the TCEQ made available. Many appreciated the tutorial on measurement of wells, and some wished the workshop had been longer.

More workshops are in the works for the fall, but operators don't have to wait for the next workshop to get their questions answered. A great deal of information is [available online](#) or by calling the Small Business and Local Government Assistance hotline during business hours at 800-447-2827.

The TCEQ is committed to helping water systems improve long-term planning so that today's concerns don't become tomorrow's emergencies. 🗺️

### Information Online

Managing Public Water Systems  
<http://www.tceq.texas.gov/assistance/water/managing-small-public-water-systems-rg-501>

Texas Water Infrastructure Coordination Committee  
<http://www.twicc.org>

Public Water Systems: Compliance Resources  
<http://www.tceq.texas.gov/assistance/water/pdws>



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