

WHERE WERE YOU WHEN THE LIGHTS WENT OUT?

That question stemmed from the Great Northeast Blackout of 1965, but it was equally relevant in early September when a power transmission line running between Arizona and California shut down triggering a cascade of events that eventually knocked out power to about 5 million people, including the vast majority of the RMWD service area.

Water districts rely heavily on electrical power to pump water and collect and treat sewage, so when the power goes out our crews have to spring into action. Fortunately, about two years ago the District installed a backup emergency generator for our administration building so our communication and control system remained in operation. That backup generator allowed staff to monitor most of our remote water and sewage facilities throughout the duration of the outage.

To prevent sewage spills in the event of power outages each of our sewage pump stations has an emergency generator. As part of our ongoing maintenance program our wastewater staff carefully maintains those generators and starts them on a regular basis to help assure they are ready to go in an emergency. In this case each of the generators did their job; starting automatically and running the stations until the power was restored.

At our water facilities we rely on water stored in reservoirs to get us through power outages. A typical power outage lasts from a few minutes to a few hours, but in this case preliminary reports suggested power could be off for three days! Our storage tanks are nowhere near large enough to supply the distribution system for such an extensive blackout, so we relied on portable emergency generators, engine-driven pumps, and the skill and ingenuity of our system operators to keep water in the system.

For RMWD the blackout couldn't have come at a worse time. High summer temperatures had resulted in weeks of ensuing high water demand. To make matters worse, we participate in an SDG&E program that gives us a reduced power rate in exchange for curtailing our electrical consumption when they ask us to do so. They had made such a request for the days preceding the blackout, and as a result we weren't able to fill our reservoirs as high as we normally would. Those combined factors meant that we didn't have as much water in storage as we would have preferred.

Fortunately our system operators have a lot of experience moving water around in our system, and the blackout certainly gave them the opportunity to put that experience to good use! Operators monitored reservoir levels throughout the night to make sure we maintained adequate flow and pressure. In many cases we had to rely on older radio technology since cell phone service was also affected by the power outage. Our crews closely coordinated flow changes and other activities with staff from the San Diego County Water Authority (CWA). The CWA was very accommodating to our system's needs even though they had to physically send staff out in to the field to make flow changes since their control system was down as a result of the blackout.

Over the last several years we have been investing in our infrastructure, and in this power outage that investment really paid off. In addition to the aforementioned emergency generator at our office we purchased a trailer-mounted generator that was used to power pumps that refilled storage tanks. Also, the recent completion of two major pipeline projects under the San Luis Rey River meant that we had the system capacity to move large volumes of water throughout the district. It wasn't an easy task, but by the time the electricity came back on our crews had managed to keep water in all areas of our distribution system, and the sewer system functioned without incident.

**RAINBOW
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WATER
DISTRICT**

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**DISTRICT BOARD TO CONSIDER
RATE INCREASES**

At the October 25th meeting the Board of Directors will consider increasing our water commodity and access rates as a result of price increases from the San Diego County Water Authority (CWA) and Metropolitan Water District (MWD). The proposed increases are entirely pass-through costs to the CWA and MWD; Rainbow does not get to keep any of the money.

If approved by the Board, water rates would increase by an average of between 6 to 9 percent (depending on your type of account), and fixed monthly fees would increase between 9 and 16 percent (depending on your type of account). Part of the increase results from the amount the CWA and MWD charge Rainbow for system access charges. That charge increased from \$2.96 million to \$3.42 million annually.

Currently, the amount Rainbow gets to keep for each unit of water we sell is \$0.56; that amount will not change. All of the proposed increase is a pass-through cost. If approved the new rates would go into effect with the January 2012 water bills.

COMMITTEE VACANCIES

RMWD is currently seeking new community volunteers to fill a couple of vacancies on its Communications Committee.

The Communications Committee is responsible for matters of internal and external communications including: positive public image; positive staff relationships; community outreach; media relations; water conservation programs; intergovernmental relations; and other public relations programs.

If you are interested in volunteering to serve on the RMWD Communications Committee, please contact Dawn Washburn at (760) 728-1178 Ext. 129.

**UPDATE FOR IAWP AND SAWR RATE
CUSTOMERS**

If you are one of our agricultural rate customers it is almost time for the annual opt-out period. In a few weeks you should receive a letter from us describing changes to both rate programs and asking you to decide whether or not you want to keep the agricultural rates for another year. Please make sure you look for our letter.

Keep in mind the agricultural discounts are not provided by Rainbow, but come from either the CWA or MWD; Rainbow charges domestic and agricultural customers the same rate (\$0.56 per unit). The agriculture discounts are offered in exchange for customers in those programs agreeing to be the first ones who must curtail water use in the event of a water supply shortage. Both programs are closed to new enrollment, and customers may opt out of the programs, but once out, cannot be reinstated.

RMWD EMPLOYEE CERTIFICATIONS

Over the past year, the employees listed below earned the following certifications:

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| Wayne Nault: | Water Distribution 4 Certification |
| Ed Bradley: | Certificate of Achievement in Water Technology Education |
| Steve Coffey: | Water Distribution Grade 5 Certification |
| Lawrence Garcia: | Water Distribution Grade 3 Certification |
| Mike Adams: | Water Distribution Grade 3 Certification |
| Dan Kogutkiewicz: | Water Distribution Grade 5 and Water Treatment Operator 3 Certification, Respectively |

Congratulations Wayne, Ed, Steve, Lawrence, Mike, and Dan!