

Public Radio Puts Spotlight On Tireless Water Pros



By Sara Jerome
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Water and wastewater professionals don't always get much credit for the pivotal role they play in keeping society running.

Just ask Jennifer Pemberton, a reporter who's helping raise awareness about the water sector through her radio show "The Source." She recently relayed this anecdote on her show page: "A couple years ago I was home for Thanksgiving.

Among the litany of things my family said they were thankful for were electricity and clean water. That's because this particular wing of my family is employed by various utility companies," she wrote.

"Then we started talking about who had Friday off and it turned out everyone did except the guy who worked at the wastewater treatment plant. 'It's a big day at the plant,' he said, which took everyone a little while to process. That's when we started to call the day after Thanksgiving 'Brown Friday,'" she continued.

Pemberton's work helps raise awareness about the role and importance of the water and wastewater industry. Her hour-long show, which airs on the last Friday of every month, is a Utah Public Radio (UPR) production.



“The Source” highlights the typical challenges faced by water and wastewater workers. In the most recent episode, Pemberton caught up with Jim Harps, the wastewater treatment manager in Logan, Utah. His system offers services to 88,000 people, taking in 12 MGD of wastewater.

“It’s always kind of fun to pause and take a look and see what raw wastewater looks like,” he said on the show, walking Pemberton through a tour. “You occasionally see Fruit Loops.”

New nutrient standards mean that Logan has to double down on its treatment processes. Wastewater lagoons are a major part of Logan’s water treatment infrastructure. Construction on whatever will replace Logan’s sewage lagoon will begin in the upcoming years, Pemberton reported.

The UPR show was inspired by Utah State University’s “Year of Water” celebration in 2015. “As a way to recognize the efforts made by its water scientists and engineers, Utah State University is celebrating 2015 as the Year of Water,” UPR explained.

The university has had water as a focal point since its inception. “From this university’s earliest moments — from Day 1, that is — our core mission directed us to predict, then research, then systematically and scientifically solve Utah’s water problems and address the state’s water needs,” the university explains.

The value of work done by the water and wastewater industry is often overlooked by the public. In 2014, the American Water Works Association (AWWA) ranked value-of-water issues among the top concerns of water professionals. Numbers four and five on AWWA's list, respectively, were "public understanding of the value of water resources" and "public understanding of the value of water systems and services."

For more stories about the people who make water and wastewater treatment possible, visit Water Online’s Labor Solutions Center. For more on the work being done to promote the value of water among ratepayers, visit Water Online’s Consumer Outreach Solutions Center.

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