



NEWS RELEASE

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METRO WASTEWATER RECLAMATION DISTRICT SENDS HELP TO ALAMOSA

DENVER, April 7 — The Metro Wastewater Reclamation District recently sent two wastewater treatment plant operators to Alamosa to help that southern Colorado city recover from a salmonella outbreak. Other Colorado water utilities also sent help.

On March 27, Process Control Supervisor Tom Acampora and Plant Operator Paul Harrison left for Alamosa to help officials there deal with the salmonella outbreak that was traced back to the public water supply distribution system. They stayed onsite in Alamosa for six days.

“They monitored the wastewater collection system and helped operate the wastewater treatment plant,” said Director of Operations and Maintenance Steve Rogowski.

Alamosa used heavy doses of chlorine to disinfect and flush its water system. Metro’s employees were called on to assess the impact the heavy doses of chlorine would have on the city’s wastewater treatment process.

The salmonella sickened more than 300 people and affected the entire city. It forced businesses, churches, and local schools to close their doors.

The Metro District responded to the crisis as a member of the Colorado Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (CoWARN). WARN evolved in California and Florida to help provide critical assistance following major disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes. This was the first time the CoWARN network was activated.

“It was clearly the right thing to do,” said District Manager Cathy Gerali. “It is our mission to protect health and the environment. Denver Water and Aurora Water were among the other agencies that stepped forward to help Alamosa weather its water crisis.”

“This was good for Metro’s staff because we had to learn how to respond to a crisis without access to a fully stocked warehouse. Our participation helped us improve our emergency response skills,” said Rogowski. “This was a tough assignment.”

The City of Alamosa had asked for trained distribution system operators to help flush its water distribution system and for trained Class A wastewater plant operators with activated sludge experience to help monitor and neutralize high chlorine residuals entering the wastewater treatment plant from the collection system and to assist with plant operations.

The Metro Wastewater Reclamation District is the largest wastewater treatment agency in the Rocky Mountain West. It treats about 140 million gallons of wastewater a day and serves 1.6 million people in a 600-square mile service area that includes Denver, Arvada, Aurora, Lakewood, part of Westminster, Wheat Ridge, and Thornton, together with about 40 sanitation and water and sanitation districts in the metropolitan Denver area.

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