

TEXAS WATER UTILITIES JOURNAL

Are you prepared for the new regulations?

by Sam Godfrey- TWUA Public Education Committee

During the 78th legislative session (2003) House Bill 3338 was introduced and is now awaiting signature of the governor for approval. This bill will require retail public water systems providing potable water to perform and file a water audit with the Texas Water Development Board. The water audit will require the utility to analyze their system. Are you prepared for what this audit may find? You have probably heard the ole saying "You'd better get your duck in a row."

The purpose of a water audit is to quantify the systems water loss and help determine problem areas. A system-wide water audit will assess the efficiency of the water system and can be used as a tool for making good management decisions. A water audit can be compared to a checkbook; it is a check and balance of the water system. Accurate information is needed to complete a factual audit.

House Bill 3338 will be in section 16.0121 of the water code. New water audit methodologies are required to comply with this bill. The Texas Water Development Board is given the responsibility for developing guidelines for performing the audit. The Board is required to consider population density, source of water supply, mean income and financial soundness of the utility. House Bill 3338

will take effect September 1, 2003. A major change in the way the new water audit is conducted will be accounting for losses of water from the distribution system as well as inaccuracies in meters, accounting/billing and theft. In order to "break out" the various components of water loss, a utility will need to do a detailed water audit. Water loss is divided into real losses and apparent losses. Real losses are leaks and overflows. Apparent losses are billing errors, meter inaccuracies and theft. Usually, statistical analysis as well as direct measurements and other techniques are used to determine the components of water loss.

In order to perform the audit, a system needs to update maps, records (production, flushing and other uses), and current billing information. Although most utilities will seek help from an experienced professional, only you will be able to determine if you want to deal with the water audit yourself. A utility can work on a water audit from different directions. You can conduct a comprehensive leak survey performed by a trained professional to determine real water losses. After repairs, the remainder will be inaccurate meters, billing problems or theft. If you decide to change out your meters that is another step in the process of elimination. This can be a costly

approach if the meters are accurate. The best management practice is to understand what is going on with your system before making many decisions. Assistance is available in providing a wide range of services to help you get your utility tuned-up and running smoothly. Here are some points to keep in mind when selecting a professional to do your audit.

- What services does the company offer?
- How much experience does the auditor have (is he/she a licensed operator with past utility management history)?
- Does this company have experience with the new audit method?
- Does he/she understand the problems of operating your utility?
- What will the final report include?

This water audit may be just what your utility needs. It can help you identify lost water and lost revenue, and the procedure will most probably be paid off from savings gained in the first year after the audit.

For more information concerning water audits, contact TWUA Public Education Committee member Sam Godfrey @ sgodfrey@samco-leakservice.com or (512) 263-7043