

# Water Board Basics: Keys for Success

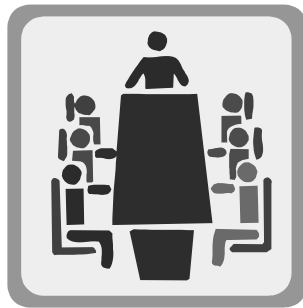
## Board Responsibilities

The Water Board operates in much the same way as the Board of directors of any private company. In a nutshell, the Board sets the direction for the utility. Notice the terminology. The Board *sets the direction for*, as opposed to, *runs* the utility. There's a big difference. The system operator runs the utility.

So, what's involved in setting the direction for the utility? The Board has five major responsibilities, including: 1) complying with Nevada and federal laws/regulations; 2) developing and enacting policies; 3) setting an annual budget; 4) hiring and keeping a certified operator; and 5) keeping records.

## Ensuring compliance with federal and state laws

Today, there are at least 700 potential contaminants in drinking water. These contaminants can be harmful to the customer's health. The Safe Drinking Water Act is the driving force behind setting maximum contaminant levels. Board members are responsible for making sure the water system is complying with the federal and state laws designed to protect public health. It is important that Board members read the Nevada Revised



Statutes and the Nevada Administrative Code. If Board members have questions, they can ask for help! Nevada Bureau of Health Protection staff can be contacted directly for assistance with the regulations. Technical assistance providers, such as Rural Community Assistance Corporation, Nevada Rural Water

Association and private consulting firms, can also assist by explaining regulatory compliance documents.

## Developing and enacting policies

Another basic responsibility of the Water Board is to develop and enact policies affecting water system operation. The Board should adopt a set of policies that define how water service is provided to its customers. These policies may be called a number of things, such as Policies of Service, Tariffs, Customer Service Policies, Operating Policies or Water Ordinance. The Board must prepare these rules and regulations in writing; distribute the rules to all customers; make sure that the rules are fair to all customers; and create rules that are easily administered and enforced by utility employees. When these four recommendations are followed, it makes the job of a Board member much more productive.

- 🔑 Board Responsibilities
- 🔑 Board Meetings
- 🔑 Budgets
- 🔑 Capital Improvements
- 🔑 Meter Replacement Program
- 🔑 Operational Record Keeping

Nevada Bureau  
of Health  
Protection Services

1179 Fairview Dr.  
Carson City, Nevada 89701

775/687-4750

fax 775/687-3218

[www.state.nv.us/health/bhps](http://www.state.nv.us/health/bhps)

*Support for this project was provided by the Nevada Drinking Water State Revolving Fund — A federal program administered by the Nevada Bureau of Health Protection Services to provide technical assistance and to loan funds to Nevada private and public water systems to ensure federal Safe Drinking Water Act regulation compliance.*

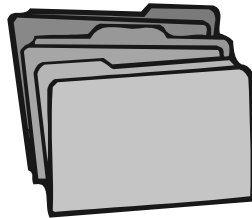
## *Keys for Success: Board Responsibilities*

### Setting the annual budget

Approving the annual budget is a way for the *Board* to set policy. Spending the approved budget is implementation of the policy, and that is the *operator's* responsibility. A written budget provides a road map for the Board. Good budgets require planning, which involves deciding *in advance* what the utility's needs are in the short- and long-term. A short-term budget is used to group costs and income that will be incurred/accrued over an annual period. This budget is usually called an Operations & Maintenance budget. A long-range budget anticipates planned improvements and estimates future operational expenses such as replacement costs for worn-out pieces of equipment and funding to replace major components of the transmission, distribution and storage system. This budget is called a Capital Improvement budget.

### Hiring and retaining a certified operator

The Board is responsible for hiring a certified water utility operator. It is also responsible for providing additional training for its operator. It is vital that all small rural water utility employees fully understand their duties and responsibilities. A good Board provides clear lines of authority and communication. All utility staff must be given clear guidelines by the Board regarding what authority they have, and more importantly, what authority they don't have. One of the best ways for an operator to understand his various duties and responsibilities is to have a clearly-written job description. Providing a job description is a Board responsibility.



ity. An accurate job description enables the operator to be aware of job duties and authority. Many small water utilities do not have job descriptions for all employees or the job descriptions are too general or vague. A well-thought out job description creates less confusion and reduces mistakes or misunderstandings in the daily water system operation and management.

### Keeping records

Records hold an organization together. The process of *keeping* records is the responsibility of the Board. The Board and its operator are responsible for *making* accurate records. The difference is often misunderstood. A record could be as simple as a written notation of how many gallons a groundwater well produced over a month's time. Finding that record next year, during the same month, shows that the utility keeps its records. When developing a record keeping system, the Board must decide what records to collect, where to store them, who has access to them and how

long they can be out of storage.

There are four basic types of records that a utility needs to keep — legal, financial, managerial and operational records.

The Board serves its customers. Utilities have a product to make — potable and wholesome water — and a service to provide — water delivered at adequate pressure 24-hours-a-day. When water utilities are operated as businesses, Board members serve to benefit their communities. Communities depend on effective Boards to provide safe drinking water.