



# *NEWS RELEASE*

Illinois Potable Water Supply Operators Association  
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## **Outstanding Operators in Drinking Water Recognized at State-wide Event**

### *2014 Operators of the Year named in Springfield*

**Springfield, IL** –The Illinois Potable Water Supply Operators Association and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency recognized eight outstanding professionals in their individual categories of service. These operators produce and supply drinking water for Illinois public water supply consumers.

Drinking water professionals and guests of the Illinois Potable Water Operators Association (IPWSOA) honored **Kevin Conover**, Clark-Edgar Rural Water District, Marshall, IL, as Groundwater Operator of the Year. **Vince Newton**, City of Geneseo, IL, and **Edward Earnhart**, Anna-Jonesboro Water Commission, Anna, IL, were named runners-up for the top spot. All three were recognized for their outstanding work in supplying safe drinking water on a daily basis to consumers, as well as their contributions to the industry and community.

Operators are rated on the day-to-day operation of facilities that treat surface water or groundwater from their water source and distribute it to consumers. "Operator of the Year" is the highest professional honor operators can receive in recognition of service and performance in the waterworks industry. In addition, finalists are designated in each category.

**Kevin Conover**, Manager and Chief Operator of the **Clark-Edgar Rural Water District**, was selected as Operator of the Year in the Groundwater Category. Conover is responsible for the distribution of 750,000 gallons of water each day to homes and businesses served by the District. He maintains and operates the treatment facilities used to produce water from three wells, completing all reporting and sampling required to determine water supply safety and document compliance with state and federal standards.

**Vince Newton**, **City of Geneseo** Chief Water Operator, distributes 800,000 gallons of water each day to 3200 service connections through 42 miles of water main. The Geneseo treatment plant includes both iron and manganese removal. Vince has also taken an active role in educating the nearby Hillcrest Home water supply personnel to operate and maintain their facility due to a change in personnel. Vince is a Make-A-Wish Foundation volunteer and has been involved with granting 15 wishes in his local Chapter, thus receiving the 2009 Shooting Star Award for his efforts .

**Edward Earnhart, Anna-Jonesboro Water Commission**, is the Head Operator of a groundwater plant that treats with lime-softening to obtain maximum water quality. The plant distributes 1.1 million gallons of water through 22 miles of water mains to customers throughout the Commission. Ed also teaches classes at Shawnee Community College to help interested students prepare to become qualified as Certified Operators with the Illinois EPA.

There are approximately 4000 certified drinking water operators in the State of Illinois. These operators were nominated and selected by owners, operators and other professionals in the drinking water industry. Finalists are then reviewed by other certified drinking water operators who serve on the Operator of the Year Nomination and Final Selection Committees of IPWSOA. Winners and finalists are nominated by their peers, screened by a pre-selection committee, and chosen by a second committee that interviews nominees at their facilities during a fly-around of the state. Committee members, all operators, use a numeric system to rate nominees. The results are then tallied, and winners finalized by computer.

These operators were honored during the Association's 83rd annual conference at the President Abraham Lincoln Hotel in Springfield. Members from all areas of the state met to stay current on new industry regulations, equipment and processes. Winners of the 2014 awards were announced and received their trophies during the three day event.

Speakers and displays at the 2014 conference focused on safe operation; compliance with State and federal regulations; and new operational and analytical techniques and equipment.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and the IPWSOA co-sponsor the conference. The Agency oversees operations of approximately 1,800 public water supplies serving Illinois and their compliance with federal and state drinking water regulations.