



NEWS RELEASE

Illinois Potable Water Supply Operators Association
1330 West State Street, P O Box 1146
Jacksonville, Illinois 62651-1146
Phone: 217/652-1869

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 18, 2015

CONTACT:
Lou Allyn Byus, 217-652-1869

Jim R. Burris Recognized as Groundwater Water Operator of the Year at State-wide Event

2015 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 **Jim R. Burris, City of Wood River, IL**, as Groundwater Operator of the Year. **Duane T. Ifft, City of Fairbury**, and **Elizabeth Doellman, American Water Company-Champaign, 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. Finalists are designated in each category.

Jim R. Burris, Chief Operator for the **City of Wood River Water Treatment Plant**, was selected as Operator of the Year in the Groundwater Category. Burris has served 19 years in the water industry, starting part-time at the age of 15 in the wastewater field. Jim holds a Class A Water Supply Operator Certification, and is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the water plant, 5 wells and 3 water towers. He has instituted a large number of safety improvements within the plant, and has established many training opportunities for his 2 full time and 3 floating personnel. His nomination stated that, "Jim's hard work and devotion has been proven in the many projects he has undertaken in order to make the treatment process better and improved the working environment."

Burris is a graduate of the Southern Illinois University Environmental Resources Training Center program. This program provides water and wastewater specific education and training for those interested in a full time career in the water industry. He also played baseball for SIUE while enrolled.

Wood River serves 10,500 water consumers through 4,570 service connections. The treatment plant produces an average of 1.5 million gallons of water each day.

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 84th 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 2015 awards were announced and received their trophies during the three day event.

Speakers and displays at the 2015 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.