



NEWS RELEASE

Illinois Potable Water Supply Operators Association
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Steve Fletcher Recognized as an Outstanding Drinking Water Operator 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 **Steve Mueller, City of Columbia**, as Distribution Operator of the Year. **Steve Fletcher, Washington County Water Company**, and **James Parkhill, Village of Bluford**, were named finalists 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 pump surface water or groundwater from their water source and distribute it to consumers. "Operator of the Year" is the highest professional honor an operator can receive in recognition of service and performance in the waterworks industry. In addition, finalists are designated in each category.

Steve Fletcher, manager/operator of the **Washington County Water Company**, is responsible for this large rural water system that distributes water each day to 5,500 service connections through 1,600 miles of water main, over 500 flushing hydrants, 7 water towers and 5 pumping stations. Fletcher holds a Class C Water Operators Certification and supervises 4 full time operators. He takes great pride in Washington County's ability to serve rural customers that would otherwise need to rely on private wells for their drinking water. He is currently senior vice-president of the National Rural Water Association. Steve's letter of nomination cites him as ". . . extremely knowledgably [sic] with many years of experience and has made Washington County Water System what is today, a reliable water source for the rural community."

Fletcher also serves as a part-time policeman for the City of Nashville, and Chief Deputy Coroner. He enjoys hunting and fishing in his spare time.

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.

Operators of the Year and nominees 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.