



# *NEWS RELEASE*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 18, 2015

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## **Duane T. Ifft 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 **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 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 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.

**Duane T. Ifft, City of Fairbury, IL**, was one of three finalists for this category. He is the Fairbury Waterworks Superintendent, and has 35 years of experience working for the City. Ifft holds a Class A Water Supply Operators Certification. He is responsible for operating and maintaining 6 wells, a lime softening and iron removal plant, a 500,000 gallon water tower and 227 meters with the assistance of 3 full time and 6 part-time employees under his direction. Ifft was instrumental in replacing old water meters with Automatic Meter Reading technology to provide all customers with accurate monthly usage information. This has allowed staff to devote more time to system maintenance. Ifft still finds time to volunteer at his local church. His nomination letter commended him as follows: "Duane is a very conscientious person. He always wants to give the best possible water he can, he is great dealing with the public and addresses everyone's concerns promptly and professionally."

Fairbury serves approximately 4,000 consumers through 1,680 service connections. The water plant treats 360,000 gallons per 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.