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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

WATER & WASTES DIGEST is published exclusively for the 90,000+ decision makers in the municipal and industrial water, wastewater and water pollution industries. These individuals actively design, specify, buy, operate and maintain the equipment, chemicals and services used for water treatment. Editorial content in this audited publication highlights new products and literature concerning the supply, collection, treatment and distribution of drinking water; the collection, treatment and disposal of wastewater; and hazardous waste pollution control. Regular Product Emphasis and High-Tech Focus sections feature major equipment and systems. A product directory is included in the annual June *Buyer's Guide*.

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Loosening the Squeeze

As the nation anticipates the results of the upcoming election, the economy is on yet another rollercoaster ride. All in all, the forecast is gloomy; however, recent numbers for the clean technology and green sector continue an upward trend.

But what's most astounding is that while unemployment rates reached 6.1% as of August 2008, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, the water and wastewater industry has a workforce gap that continues to grow.

In a 2008 *Water & Wastes Digest (WWD)* Subscriber Survey, respondents listed staffing among the top five most important industry topics in the coming year that will likely affect their water and wastewater facility.

There is no doubt that the U.S. water industry is about to face a national skills shortage and facilities across the country will find it more difficult than ever to fill technical positions—particularly scientific and engineering jobs.

This situation is expected to worsen in the next five to 10 years, as 41.5% of survey respondents said they are between the ages of 50 and 59 and almost one-quarter of respondents said that they have been in the industry for 30 years or more.

This mass retirement exodus, however, is not the only factor that plays a role in the current workforce shortage. The fact of the matter is that the younger generation is simply not very interested in enrolling in science, engineering or environmental programs.

Competition, of course, is also part of the equation. Currently, municipalities are pretty passive. They are neither aggressively reaching out to the general media to identify this growing need nor working with universities to attract students and new graduates to the field by offering competitive scholarships or internships.

As a result, better-paid consulting agencies and other sectors usually attract desirable, skilled personnel.

The good news is that the industry is recognizing this issue and trying to address it effectively. For example, at the upcoming WWEMA 100th Annual Meeting, to be held Nov. 13 to 15 in Tucson, Ariz., the Business Program features a presentation titled: "Addressing the Workforce Gap." The presentation will discuss strategies for maintaining existing workforce and new approaches to technically skilled employee recruitment.

In addition, every year WWEMA and *WWD* award a scholarship to a student seeking a career in the water or wastewater field. Applications for the 2008 WWEMA & *WWD* Scholarship will be accepted until Oct. 17, 2008.

I invite you to reach out to students with academic achievements and commitment to environmental protection and encourage them to participate.

It is vital that this industry utilizes all available options and sources to loosen the workforce shortage squeeze.




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- Pumps
- Rural & Small Utility Systems
- UV/Ozone
- SCADA
- Plant Profile