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**IOWPA**



# A *Newsletter* for The Indiana Onsite Wastewater Professionals Association



First Quarter Edition • March 2004

## *President's Message ...*

**O**n January 16, 2004, the Indiana Onsite Wastewater Professionals Association (IOWPA) Board of Directors met for its first meeting after the annual conference which was held December 3 & 4, 2003. Among the many things that transpired at the meeting were the elections of officers. At the Board of Directors meeting in January 2003, I was selected as the IOWPA Secretary. I had a great learning experience during that year and the rest of the Directors honored me by naming the President of IOWPA for 2004.

This is my first of at least four President's Messages. It is my goal to have a President's Message to send out in the quarterly newsletter and the same message will appear on the IOWPA website [www.iowpa.org](http://www.iowpa.org). If I feel that there have been major developments, I will include additional messages on the website. This should be easy since I am also the chair of the website committee.

I feel that it is time that the IOWPA membership gets to know their President a little better. I want to give you all some background on me prior to discussing some of the plans of IOWPA in 2004. I have a degree in Environmental Health from the Indiana State University (1996) and spent four years with the Hendricks County Health Department. My main area of focus was onsite systems. I dealt with all contractors that worked in the county as well as other regulators while employed in the health department. After leaving the Health Department, I designed onsite systems for an engineering firm. This gave me the vision of regulators from the industry point of view. This gave me more insight into how engineers and installers deal with regulators. I feel that this gives me a good background into the two major areas of focus in the onsite industry – installation and inspection. I also worked with the Rural Community Assistance Program (RCAP) where I worked with small rural communities to develop infrastructure projects. While at RCAP, I worked

with State and local health departments in updating a survey to determine the scope of the wastewater disposal problems in Indiana. There are over 500 small rural communities that don't have an adequate means of treating and disposing wastewater. That gives you the premise of the need for the Indiana Onsite Wastewater Professionals Association. There is a big need out there and we are going to have to all work together in a professional manner to protect the environment while addressing wastewater disposal issues.

When I worked at the health department, I always told people that there were three parts to my job: education, inspection and enforcement. If I educated people in the correct methods for onsite system installation and did a thorough inspection then I felt that enforcement would not be an issue. In my four years with the Hendricks County Health Department, that adage served me well. I am going to take that adage and with small modifications fit it into the IOWPA and what the Board of Directors hope to accomplish on behalf of the organization. For the regulators and installers out there, what makes your interaction easier? Dare I say communication. Education and for that matter inspection are about communication. It is the same with IOWPA, if all of the people working in the onsite industry want to be able to interact together for the good of the profession and the environment, then communication is crucial. If we are able to talk to one another and educate ourselves and others on new ideas then when it comes time for that septic system inspection it should go a whole lot smoother.

This year, the IOWPA Board of Directors are about communication. This is something that we all agree needs work and it is going to get it. How will we do it? The Board is committed to getting out 4 newsletters this year to inform and educate the membership. The Board is going to have a website that will educate and inform not only the membership but the general public as

well. It is a personal goal of mine to make [iowpa.org](http://iowpa.org) email accounts for any member who wants one a reality. If we can get e-mail addresses for every member that will speed delivery of new information to you and you won't just get information when you read the newsletter. In fact, if the e-mail addresses happen, IOWPA may send newsletters electronically. Another means of communication will be the annual conference. Read your newsletter to find out more about it. This year's conference is going to be very different and extremely educational. I feel that this may be the first step toward something that I know is important to the membership – installer education that is accepted by County health departments. Plan on attending the conference, it should be a very good one!

I think that you now have a better idea of who I am and where it is that IOWPA is going. I want to thank you on behalf of the Board of Directors for your continued interest and involvement with IOWPA. Now, I want to challenge you all. We have a lot of new Directors this year and they have made the commitment to be involved and move IOWPA forward. I would like to get a similar commitment from the rest of the membership. We need a membership that involves others beyond the Board of Directors. If you think it is a good organization, get someone else to join. Knowledge is power and if we spread the knowledge the power can make real change in the Indiana onsite industry. If you see something that needs improvement, e-mail or call me. As I have stated before in this message it is all about education, if something needs work let me know and I will work with the Board to see that it gets the proper attention. I look forward to serving in 2004, lets all communicate and bring about positive change through IOWPA.

Respectfully,

*Todd D. Trinkle*

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## 2 From the Editor ...

This is Ralph Reed, and I'm currently the acting editor for the IOWPA News. I'm sure you'll realize before you finish reading this article, that I'm writing it because nothing would make me happier than to have all the installers and cleaners in the great state of Indiana become members of IOWPA. But before I get to that, let me tell you how IOWPA and other onsite organizations have helped us.

We were a very small operation consisting of only my wife, Shirley, one hired laborer, myself, and one two-wheel drive case backhoe that I drove to each job. We struggled from year to year for a long time in the septic installation business just trying to make ends meet. Then in 1995 something happened that was destined to change everything. My son, Ernie quit a very good high paying job with one of the largest environmental companies in the country and joined Shirley and I in the wastewater industry.

Shortly after Ernie joined Shirley and I, we purchased a new trailer and a used dozer. The trailer had steel plates over the wheels, which lowered the over all height of the trailer 3 inches. One frosty morning I was unloading the dozer and as I started backing the dozer off of the trailer, the tracks hit the frosty steel plates. The dozer and I slid off the trailer and hit approximately 15 feet down from the side of the road. I did not have my seat belt on and I tried to jump to no avail. In those few seconds, I knew that I was destined to die. This time, everything got very quiet, I looked around with disbelief. I was sitting on the frozen ground in the center of the roll cage of the dozer! I knew immediately that God had saved my life, I said "thank you God" and crawled out of the roll cage, walked over to a nearby woods, got on my knees and prayed to God to save my soul. Well, God did exactly that. That day I turned my life over to God and as you read the rest of this story, you will see how he has blessed us.

After a short while in the business, Ernie made a remark reminiscent of Mart Luther King Jr.'s immortal words, "Dad, I have a dream. If we expect to make it in this business we must be able to answer any questions people might ask us about onsite wastewater problems." I replied, "Son, if that is what you think; mthen got for it, but I'm just a dumb old backhoe operator."

Ernie got busy and did some research and found out about the Kentucky Onsite Wastewater Association (KOWA). He joined the organization and started attending their workshops. He pressed me a little and urged, "Dad, you really need to start attending KOWA, too!"

I was a bit reluctant, but I decided to join and began traveling to Kentucky with Ernie to their workshops. We were thrilled with what we learned from professionals and other installers. We started investigating the availability of other workshops and started attending seminars at Purdue University in Lafayette, Indiana and also the Cole Publishing's installer workshop at the National Pumper and Installers Expo in Nashville, Tennessee. Ernie and I were amazed at how much knowledge we gained from these onsite workshops. We absorbed so much information that was valuable and applicable to our own business. Then I had a vision and said, "Ernie, we really need an organization like KOWA in Indiana!"

Ernie agreed, and we started to work on this new

goal. We know we needed professional speakers, so we called Dr. Matt Byers at the Zoeller Pump Company because Matt plays a big role in KOWA's workshops. He agreed to speak. Then we called Paul Ashburn, one of the owners of the Ashco RFS Onsite Wastewater Recycling Company. He's influential with the EPA, and he, too, agreed to speak. We had met both of these gentlemen at KOWA, Purdue University and the National Pumper and Installer EXPO and this connection proved to be the first important step in the development of our organization. We felt these gentlemen were the most knowledgeable people we had met in the onsite wastewater field.

Now that we had speakers, we started contacting installers, cleaners, regulators, real estate people, distributors, suppliers and anyone else we could think of that had an interest in onsite wastewater operations. We set a date, and approximately sixty people showed up at our little farm and attended the first meeting in our barn! At first we thought we might name our organization the Hoosier Onsite Wastewater Association (HOWA), but as the meeting progressed a gentleman by the name of Forest Hersberger introduced himself as the vice president of Indiana Onsite Wastewater Professional Association (IOWPA). He informed us that they were trying to promote the same kind of professionalism in northern Indiana that we were striving for in southern Indiana. We decided that we didn't need two separate organizations, so we joined forces and retained the name IOWPA.

Since that evening in the barn, IOWPA has grown in leaps and bounds. IOWPA's mission statement is what this organization is all about - We are committed to protecting the public health and the environment of Indiana by improving and increasing access to wastewater treatment for individuals and communities currently living beyond centralized wastewater treatment facilities:

**Goal #1 Public Health** - Accurately identify and increase the public's awareness of potential dangers associated with inadequately treated wastewater.

**Goal #2 Education** - Provide education for individuals and organizations who influence or are influenced by wastewater treatment issues.

**Goal #3 Communication** - Promote professional results by communicating, without prejudice, the knowledge and experience of every individual involved in onsite wastewater treatment.

**Goal #4 Networking** - Create an information network that will facilitate the implementation of solutions to Indiana's wastewater challenges.

"IOWPA begins with you and the way in which you approach the challenges ahead. The very sound of IOWPA implies hope for the future not frustration with the present or the past. The power of one when combined with the goals of others all sharing a common mission is dramatically increased. Together we can share our experience and our knowledge with the hope that our mission statement will be realized by working at achieving success through each of our goals.

IOWPA is a state of mind that encourages one to set strategies for accomplishing any or all of the above goals. Begin any task with an end in mind by deciding on what is important to you and your associates. Write out what you want to achieve and see if it doesn't help to move us as a professional association even closer to

solving any of the above goals. Place your good intentions on paper and write strategies to make your efforts successful. Examine your strategies and decide if they are specific enough to easily communicate, measurable enough to know when you've succeeded, reasonable enough to be achievable, relevant to the issues at hand, and given an adequate time frame to measure your success along the journey.

IOWPA is a commitment benefiting all of us as we work to protect the environment and the health of all citizens in our state. When times of frustration occur and we seem confused about our purpose, all we need to do is pause and reflect on how important we are as stewards of the environment. Then we look for guidance to our mission statement with our goals and our strategies for achieving them knowing that we are more than just one."

Since IOWPA has done so much by educating us in the onsite wastewater field, I personally donate as much time as possible to this organization in return. Now let me get back to my story. First, I joined KOWA, then IOWPA, and finally IEHA. I also sit on the Wastewater Management Board helping to modify the new ISDH onsite wastewater rules. We work closely with Purdue University, ISDH, and our local health departments: IDEM, RCAP, INCAA, IN Capacity Center, and EPA. All of these organizations and especially IOWPA have helped us tremendously to become professionals in our field. My son, Ernie and I also see the importance of taking our employees to most of the workshops so they have a clear vision of our goals as well. In fact, we have just returned with our employees, after participating in the Installer's Workshop that is sponsored by Cole Publishing each year at the National Pumper's and Installers Expo in Nashville, Tennessee.

The main focus of this article is the positive impact education through professional organizations has had on our business throughout the past eight years and how working with other knowledgeable people in the field has improved the services we provide for our community. We have become a full-service company, operating with as many as three installation crews at a time, two pumper trucks and one hundred portable restrooms. We are the Indiana distributor for The Ashco RS II and III Wastewater Treatment System and we have an excellent operation and maintenance program.

So in closing, I want to thank IOWPA and all the organizations that have helped us become the professionals that we are. A special thanks to Paul Ashburn and Dr. Matt Byers. I want to extend a very special thanks to my son, Ernie, who I am very proud of. Without Ernie's dream and IOWPA's dedication, I would probably be like about seventy five percent of our installers and cleaners today - not very professional. Ernie and I strive for professionalism in the wastewater treatment industry and we encourage all installers and cleaners to become a member of IOWPA and benefit from the expertise gained from shared knowledge. I think IOWPA is great and will only get better as more people get on board.

It is my hope and prayers, that God will bless you as he has us.

Ralph Reed, *Interim Director*

## 2004 Officers

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## A Regulators Perspective on Contractors/Installers Standardized Certification

I am sure there are installers in Indiana that do not want any kind of certification. To those, standardized certification probably sounds extreme. But actually it is just what they need. If there was one certification program that made it possible for an installer to install a system anywhere in Indiana, it would be less of a burden to the installers. The main reason would be, he/she would not have to take a test in each county he/she wanted to work. Another reason might be that he/she would be getting the same training as every other installer, and that training would be approved by the Indiana State Department of Health and other Professional organizations. It would help keep the installers up to date on changes in rules and regulations. It could promote a sense of professionalism for those who have felt less than professional, as well as each installer being part of a professional organization.

Without any kind of standardization some installers will not get an opportunity to keep up with regulations or feel part of a profession. There are installers that will still be doing sub-standard jobs and not caring.

An example of that is an incident in my own county, where an installer put a system in with numerous violations. He didn't even have a county license. Didn't feel it was necessary, and didn't realize the ramifications that would follow. The homeowner was very fortunate in this situation, in that modifications could be made to satisfy the Health Department. Hopefully the system, once repaired, will have a reasonable lifetime for the homeowner. It is always the homeowner that suffers these blunders.

With standardized certification, installers, can carry their certification card with them to

show the homeowner proof of certification. The installer could be on a list of certified installers that would prove his/her training to local authorities. Standardization could also give each installer a voice in an organization of professionals, (IOWPA). IOWPA has already gained the respect of regulators and other professional organizations, giving them a powerful voice in the onsite business community.

As a regulator I support the idea of standardization certification for septic system installers. It will promote necessary training, and professionalism for all installers in Indiana.

*Sincerely*

Joe Quackenbush, EHS  
Brown County Health Department

### 3rd Annual Soils and Septic Systems Workshop Co-Sponsored by Purdue University and The Indiana Onsite Wastewater Professionals Association

**What?** You are cordially invited to attend a workshop focusing on basic soil morphologic properties with reference to soil wastewater infiltration systems. This format will include discussion in the morning followed by a field exercise in the afternoon.

**When?** March 30th at the Purdue University Agricultural Centers near Vincennes and April 2nd near Lafayette. Registration will begin at 8:30 am, and the discussion will begin at 9:00 am. Following a free lunch at 12:00 pm (provided by IOWPA), a field exercise will include identification of soil morphologic properties. Program ends approximately at 4:30 pm.

**Where?** March 30, 2004 - Southwestern Purdue Agricultural Center, Knox Co. 4669 N. Purdue Road, Vincennes, IN 47591  
April 2, 2004 - Throckmorton - Purdue Agricultural Center, Tippecanoe Co. 8343 US 231 South, Lafayette, IN 47909-9049

**Who?** Speakers include 3 Soil Scientists from Purdue University (Sherry Fulk-Bringman, Don Franzmeier and Brad Lee). Indiana Registered Soil Scientists will be available for discussion during the field exercise.

**Cost?** FREE! Lunch is provided by IOWPA, but you must pre-register as participants are limited to 50 on March 30th and 100 on April 2nd.

#### Pre-registration ...

Contact Karen Clymer by phone (765) 494-8073 or by e-mail at [kclymer@purdue.edu](mailto:kclymer@purdue.edu) and let her know which workshop you will be attending!

For directions see the IOWPA website at [www.iowpa.org](http://www.iowpa.org).

## 2004 WINTER CONFERENCE

**WHO:** *All onsite professionals*

**WHAT:** *Installers, cleaners and haulers training, what's in it for me?*

**WHERE:** *To be announced!*

**WHEN:** *To be announced!*

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