



On the Water Front

May 2019 | **A Message from John Balliew, P.E., President/CEO**

EPWater takes pride in building up workforce

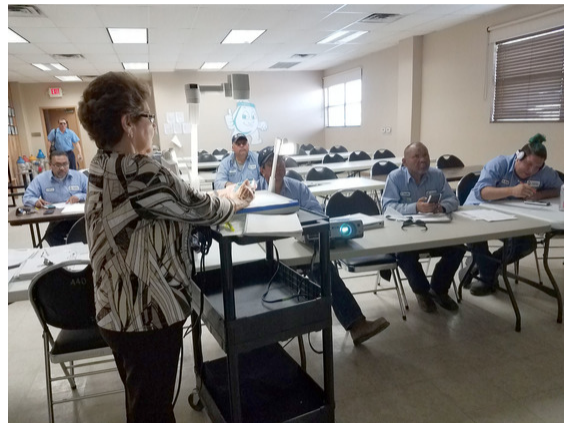
Invest in your employees, and you will build your workforce of the future.

Integral to El Paso Water's operating strategy lies a set of core values: service, stewardship, innovation, integrity, safety, teamwork and excellence.

Excellence for EPWater employees means setting high expectations, continuously improving skills and performance, and striving to achieve the best results.

Workforce solutions

U.S. employers in America are facing serious challenges because of an aging workforce, and EPWater is not immune. When those experienced employees leave the workforce, they often take years of institutional knowledge with them.



GED classes began in January at the El Paso Water facility at 210 N. Lee. Ten employees are attending GED classes from 4 to 6 p.m. daily.

When senior leadership at EPWater recognized that a third of our workforce was eligible to retire, we knew it was time to take a bold step in succession planning at all levels, with emphasis on education, skills development and cross-training.

At EPWater, our employees have many in-house choices to further their education and skills.

Recently, a group of utility leaders in our Water Distribution division, assisted by Human Resources, helped develop a program to bring El Paso Community College's GED classes to employees. The idea came after an informal analysis revealed 20% of water distribution employees lacked a GED. Classes began in January, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Now, these employees may apply for positions at EPWater that were previously out of reach.

EPWater also offers Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) monthly certification training classes in water and wastewater, so our employees can put their newly acquired skills to work at our plants.

Rising leaders

In the past fiscal year, 34 employees retired. However, in that same time, 102 employees received promotions. Many of those promotions were made possible through an increased emphasis on cross-training, which has become a key strategy for succession planning.

Cross-training – teaching employees the skills and responsibilities of another job to increase their effectiveness – offers an opportunity for growth and workforce stability.

We are now seeing a host of cross-training success stories. Two rising leaders, Wastewater Treatment Manager Aide Zamarron and Distribution and Collection Systems Division Manager Felipe Lopez came up through the engineering ranks at EPWater and are now assuming operations leadership positions. Similarly, Water Production Manager Veronica Galindo and Water Distribution Systems Manager Jaime Arriola rose through engineering and are rising stars in operations.

The message is clear: Diversity of experience goes a long way at our utility. Leadership and problem solving skills are cultivated through exposure to various parts of the water utility and learning how to confront an array of challenges.

Through our efforts, EPWater is building a skilled workforce of the future. Henry Ford, the founder of the Ford Motor Co., said it best: "The only thing worse than training your employees and having them leave is not training them and having them stay." EPWater knows our employees can make a difference. That's why investing in their futures makes good business sense.



On the Water Front is a publication of El Paso Water.
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