Tiptoeing Back to Normal

by Lilian von Rago

With a pandemic, economic turmoil, isolation, and everything that goes with it, it’s been a challenging year and a half. Pima County has honored the guidelines set forth in the Fair Labor Standards Act and the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, which allowed for teleworking options, quarantine protocols, and other safeguards including time off for staff to get vaccinated. Getting vaccinated is a tremendous service to yourself, your family, your co-workers, and your country. Between the Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson vaccines, more than 60% of adult Americans have gotten at least one dose of protection, and more than 50% of adult Americans are fully vaccinated. People are seeing the light at the end of the long Covid tunnel. Although it’s a slow re-emergence, people are coming out of isolation and figuring out what they feel comfortable doing.

Perhaps the greatest revelation coming out of the pandemic is the realization that family and friends matter more than what we ever realized. Younger generations looked toward their elders for their “keep calm and carry on” attitudes toward this crisis, and older generations appreciate younger generations for their optimism, courage, and technological savvy.

COVID-19 has also unleashed a revolution in medicine. The scientific community came together in a way that has never been done before. History taught us that it takes from four to twenty years to create conventional vaccines. The COVID vaccine was researched for more than a decade, but rolled out in a record-setting 11 months for emergency use.

We’ve learned how critical it is to have a “rainy day fund” with three to six months of emergency funds to cover the basics, and we’ve learned to further embrace technology. It seems that there is no going back. Technology gave us online work options, online entertainment, drones for food delivery, fitness and health apps, and much, much more.

Then, there’s the return to in-person work. Many people had to adjust to a new normal during lockdown which involved spending the majority of their time at home. Now, as we emerge, many are looking forward to reconnecting with friends and family.

On May 13, 2021, the CDC said fully vaccinated people can return to life without masks except where required by federal, state, local or tribal rules, including local businesses.

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Happy (almost) New Year...fiscal year, that is! July 1st (when we officially start the 2021/2022 fiscal year), is right around the corner, and there’s no better time to refocus on the six pillars of our business. The RWRD Executive Team and I meet regularly to reassess our pillars to ensure that our goals and strategies are aligned with evolving practices in an industry that is continually experiencing advances in science and technology.

The **Compliance Pillar** provides the strategic framework for achieving compliance with a complex array of regulatory requirements. Permitting, lab testing and analysis, and industrial wastewater control functions fall within the scope of this Pillar.

The **Customer Pillar** seeks to advance customer satisfaction internally and externally. Proactive public engagement, communications, and feedback are key strategies of this Pillar.

The **Employee Pillar** sets the strategic direction for creating a positive work environment where employees can thrive. Thorough staff training, communications, knowledge management, employee development, and teamwork are facets of the Employee Pillar.

The **Financial Pillar** ensures fiscal responsibility to the public and ratepayers. It provides strategic guidance for budget planning and management.

The **Safety & Security Pillar** establishes the department-wide strategies, goals, and standards for becoming a zero-accident safety culture.

The **Sustainability Pillar** establishes department-wide guidance for sustainability procedures and employee training on “green” workplace practices. Additionally, it provides strategic direction for major department and countywide programs, such as Energy Management, Water Resources Management, and Resource Recovery and Reuse.

Forward-thinking organizations understand there are always ways to improve processes, customer services, and support. RWRD is results-oriented, and committed to the philosophy, “What gets measured, gets managed.” Continuous improvement is deeply rooted in every task we complete. I continue to be proud of RWRD’s hard-working staff and their commitment to move proactively into the future in order to meet the needs of our ever-growing community.

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**SAFETY SHARE**

**Protect Your Skin**

Use sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher when outdoors. Sunscreen wears off, so reapply if you stay outdoors for more than two hours, and after you swim or engage in activity that makes you sweat.

Do you have a Safety Share to share? Email pipeline@pima.gov

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**The Pipeline, an Award-Winning Publication**

**CONTRIBUTORS:**

Ken Coulta
Justyn Dillingham
Jackson Jenkins
Jenette Lee
Patsy Padilla
Lilian von Rago

**EDITOR:**

Lilian von Rago

**MISSION STATEMENT**

Our mission is to protect the public health, safety, and the environment by providing quality service, environmental stewardship, and renewable resources.

**BE A CONTRIBUTOR**

Is there something happening in your Division? On your team? In your office? We want to read about it! Share it with us by emailing pipeline@pima.gov or call 724-6265.

**SUBMISSION DEADLINES**

Please submit your stories for the June issue to pipeline@pima.gov by Friday, June 18. If you will be submitting a photo, please send as a separate high-res JPEG attachment.
PDQ Project Underway at RWRD

At this point, you have probably been part of the PDQ Project underway at RWRD. What is a PDQ and what purpose does it serve? PDQ stands for Physical Description Questionnaire. It highlights the physical aspect of each work classification or functional title within a work classification. An example would be the work classification of Program Coordinator with the functional title of Treatment Safety Coordinator. Each Program Coordinator may have a different functional title or some of them may have the same, so there can be multiple functional titles per work classification. A different PDQ would be created if different Program Coordinators face different hazards and exposures as part of their duties. Ultimately, each employee has an associated PDQ for the position they occupy, as these PDQ’s not only direct what post job offer or recurring physical requirements are needed, but also what are utilized by FMLA or during Special Medical Evaluations. A large County-wide PDQ project was completed in 2014; needless to say, there have been many changes since then, which have resulted in the need for an update.

The Safety Office began the update in April, working with County OccMed and everyone employed at RWRD. Each work classification was reviewed and input was provided by subject matter experts, supervisors, or managers. Guidance was provided by County OccMed and everyone within the Safety Office. Currently 76 work classifications with 136 functional titles have been completed, including 29 new PDQs. 96 of the PDQs from 2014 are marked for elimination because we no longer have the work classification or the functional title.

There is still much work to be done. Even though we have detailed the physical requirements (ie. lifting, carrying, hearing, talking and more) and the hazards faced (ie. confined space, working from heights, chemical and biological environments, and more), each PDQ requires an associated Job Hazard Analysis (JHA). A Job Hazard Analysis details each step of a given task, the hazards faced, and how those hazards are mitigated. An example is each step taken in the use of a Combo truck. We have many JHAs completed within RWRD, but the focus will turn to updating the JHAs (if needed) or creating new ones. Additionally, each PDQ must be reviewed and approved by County OccMed and Facilities Management Safety before they are complete.

Ultimately, the PDQ Project will provide valuable information for each position at RWRD, outline hazards faced, and how to mitigate those hazards, provide information for various OccMed and safety-related tasks, and make RWRD a safer place to work. None of this would be possible without the focused efforts by every employee at RWRD. The Safety Office sincerely thanks each of you for your input, which highlights the success of this project.

NuReSys Project in Service; Biogas Project Starting

NuReSys: Struvite, a crystalline precipitant comprised of magnesium, ammonia, and phosphate, rapidly occludes pipes and dewatering centrifuges at the Tres Rios WRF. Abating struvite formation has traditionally been accomplished through chemical additions of ferric chloride, however this is a highly corrosive chemical and prone to damaging RWRD’s pipes, pumps and other infrastructure. While struvite accumulation has been a problem in the anaerobic digestion process for decades, it significantly worsened after the 2014 ROMP upgrades at Tres Rios. As a result, RWRD began investigating nutrient recovery technologies preventing the buildup of struvite scale in treatment equipment. In 2017, a 5-week pilot test was conducted at Tres Rios with very good results resulting in the selection of the NuReSys (Nutrient Recovery System) struvite abatement process. The Tres Rios NuReSys project is the first installation.
Prepare Your Family with Emergency Go Kits

Throughout the year, we discuss many different topics such as emergency notification programs and applications, Digital Security, Power Outages, Wildfire Awareness - and numerous preparedness actions that you can take to prepare yourself and your family. One of the most basic steps to ensuring your family’s safe response to an emergency, and something that is promoted for all RWRD personnel, is the Emergency Go Kit or Drive-Away Kit.

At RWRD, Go Kits for COOP (Continuity of Operations Planning) continuity personnel is part of our operations readiness and preparedness (see, 2021 RWRD COOP, p. 5-6). Gathering the supplies that will allow your family to safely respond to an emergency is critical. It takes forethought, and a little time, but the result is peace of mind in light of the unexpected.

Prepare your family kit.

At a minimum, you should have the basic supplies listed below:

- Water
- Food. Prepare non-perishable and easy-to-prepare items.
- Change of clothes for each family member
- Flashlight
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio
- Extra batteries or emergency chargers
- Cell phone with chargers
- Medical supplies (including prescription and non-prescription medications and medical paraphernalia) and first aid kit. The CDC has recommended that facial masks, hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes be placed in the kit to help prevent the spread of viruses.
- Multi-purpose tool and cooking implements (matches, utensils, plates/cups, etc.)
- Sanitation and personal hygiene items, including diapers, baby wipes and diaper rash cream if necessary
- Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification cards, passports, birth certificates, deed/lease documents, medication list and pertinent medical information and bank account records saved electronically or in a waterproof, portable container
- Family and emergency contact information
- Extra cash (cash or traveler’s checks)
- Sleeping bags or warm blankets for each person
- Map(s) of the area

Don’t forget Fluffy’s kit.

Your pets are an important part of your family, so they need to be taken into consideration when preparing your kit. Make sure to include any necessary items to ensure your furry, feathered, or scaly friends will be safe as well as comfortable.

- Water
- Food. Keep in an airtight, waterproof container.
- Medicine and first aid kit. Talk to your veterinarian about what is most appropriate for your pet’s emergency medical needs, and ensure that a supply of the medicine your pet takes on a regular basis is stored in a waterproof container.
- Traveling bag, crate or sturdy carrier, ideally one for each pet. Include food and water bowls for each pet.
- Sanitation needs. Include pet litter and litter box (if appropriate), newspapers, paper towels, plastic trash bags and household chlorine bleach to provide for your pet’s sanitation needs.
- Collar with ID tag and a harness or leash. Include a backup leash, collar and ID tag. Have copies of your pet’s registration information and other relevant documents in a waterproof container and available electronically.
- A picture of you and your pet together. If you become separated from your pet during an emergency, a picture of you and your pet together will help you document ownership and allow others to assist you in identifying your pet.
- Familiar items. Put favorite toys, treats or bedding in your kit. Familiar items can help reduce stress for your pet.

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Maintaining Your (RWRD Work, Family, and Pet) Go Kits.
After assembling your kit remember to maintain it so that it is ready when you need it most:
• Keep canned food in a cool, dry place.
• Store boxed food in tightly closed plastic or metal containers.
• Replace expired items as needed.
• Reevaluate your needs every year and update your kit as your family’s needs change.

Kit Storage Locations.
Predicting where you will be when an emergency occurs is impossible. Prepare and store your emergency supplies in multiple locations.
• Home: Keep this kit in a designated place and have it ready in case you have to leave your home quickly. Make sure all family members know where the kit is kept.
• Work: Be prepared to shelter at work for at least 24 hours. Continuity personnel should be prepared to carry their kits to the continuity facility or preposition the kits at the continuity facility. (See, 2021 RWRD COOP, p. 6)
• Car: In case you are stranded, keep a kit of emergency supplies in your car.

RWRAC UPDATE
The Pima County Regional Wastewater Reclamation Advisory Committee (RWRAC) held its monthly meeting virtually on May 27, 2021.
RWRD Director Jackson Jenkins said that District 1 Supervisor Rex Scott and his staff recently toured some of the department’s facilities, including the Tres Ríos Water Reclamation Facility and the Pima County Water Campus. He also said that RWRD presented its budget for the next fiscal year to the Board of Supervisors. The budget ceiling was approved by the board, and the final vote will be in June.
RWRAC Financial Subcommittee Chair Matt Matthewson was not present, and Mr. Jenkins said the subcommittee had not met recently. Capital Improvement Project (CIP) Subcommittee Chair Asia Philbin asked if there were any volunteers to join the subcommittee, and Steve Foley volunteered.
FRMD Administration Support Services Manager Mandy Armenta provided an expense and revenue summary for Period 10 of the Fiscal Year 2020/21. Next, Alison Jones of the Citizens Water Advisory Committee provided a summary of the committee’s most recent meeting. Finally, Armando Membrila and Corin Marron volunteered to be on the nominating committee.
The RWRAC will hold its next meeting on Thursday, June 24. The meeting will once again be held virtually. To view the agendas, minutes, and videos of previous meetings, visit the RWRAC page on www.pima.gov/wastewaterreclamation.

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of time in our homes. The idea of now going back to work, battling traffic, putting on professional clothing, etc. can provoke anxiety as our brain is alerted to a new potential risk in front of us. Experts say it is okay to feel like this. For those insured by Pima County’s health plan, Aetna, an excellent benefit is the Employee Assistance Program, EAP, that provides counseling and consultation at no charge to you. The service is also completely confidential; EAP does not even report the identity of employees who take advantage of the program. The EAP also features an online resource offering helpful tips, webinars, videos and self-assessments. All you need to do is visit www.mylifevalues.com or call 1-888-238-6232. When visiting the website, the username is Pima and the password is County.
As the pandemic subsides, and we look to the future, we’ll probably see more temperature-controlled outdoor event and dining spaces, and more hybrid events that give you the option to attend virtually. Masking and sanitizers may be around for years to come. If nothing else, COVID has shown us how resilient and adaptable humans are as a society, when forced to change.
in North America and involved designing and constructing a nutrient recovery facility for sequestering struvite and reducing operations and maintenance costs. It is estimated that the NuReSys process will reduce Tres Rios operating costs by $700,000 annually by reducing ferric chloride additions and improved dewatering. The new process also enhances the quality of biosolids by producing a phosphorus-rich crystal fertilizer and increasing cake biosolids dewatering by 5%. After a 60 day performance demonstration, this project is now in service.

**Biogas Project:** Biogas (which contains about 60% methane and 40% carbon dioxide) is released as a byproduct of anaerobic digestion during the treatment process. Traditionally, a small portion of the biogas has been burned in the boilers at the Tres Rios Water Reclamation Facility, but the vast majority was flared into the atmosphere as a waste by-product. Flaring of this gas contributes to greenhouse gases and wastes the energy within it. Biogas cleaning can remove carbon dioxide, water and other contaminants to become renewable natural gas (RNG) reducing greenhouse gas emissions and global warming, especially when used as a vehicle fuel. Not only can RNG be sold and transported through SouthwestGas pipelines, it qualifies for carbon credits, or RINs, which have significantly greater value. This process supports the Department’s Mission Statement commitment to be responsible stewards of the environment and to employ renewable resources and the sale of RNG environmental attributes will provide a new source of revenue for the Department. The biogas project is in the testing stages; things are moving along very well, and a celebration is being planned for the Fall of 2021.

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**NEW HIRES – Welcome!**

Lilian Bodley  
WW Laboratory Chemist  
Technical Services & Engineering Division

**PROMOTIONS – Congratulations!**

Zachary Kuzyk-Barnett  
Utility Maintenance Worker III  
Conveyance Division  
Frederico Molina  
Utility Maintenance Worker III  
Conveyance Division  
Antonio Moreno  
Utility Maintenance Worker III  
Conveyance Division  
Angel Tapia  
Public Works Crew Supervisor  
Conveyance Division

**RETIREMENTS – None**

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To all our RWRD Dads,

HAPPY FATHER’S DAY!

June 20, 2021

HAPPY BIRTHDAY to all those celebrating in JUNE!