

Norfolk Insider

City of Norfolk, NE

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April 20, 2010

"Todd Boling"



The In 100 BC, the Romans had a waste water disposal piping system set up from their homes to a nearby river. Still, disposal of waste water in most places meant to throw it out of the window- a common practice for centuries.

It wasn't until 1347 AD when thousands died of the bubonic plague and in 1665 when 60,000 died over six months in London that people started seeing a connection between disease and sanitary conditions.

Even as citizens became more aware of how important it was to keep waste water away from drinking water sources and communities, most cities into the 20th century continued to dump raw sewage into nearby rivers and streams.

It wasn't until the Clean Water Act of 1972 was passed by Congress that municipalities required most wastewater and industrial pollution to be filtered before discharging it into waterways. Still, millions around the world continue to suffer from the consequences of unsanitary conditions brought about mostly because of the lack of sewage removal or treatment. It's estimated that 1000 children die each hour around the world from diarrheal diseases.

I am the head of wastewater treatment for the City of Norfolk. I've been working at the job for 22 years and take pride in the fact that I have a part in keeping the environment clean and people healthy because of my work.

Norfolk's first wastewater treatment facility was built in 1959. At that time the city was generating 1.0 million gallons of wastewater per day. The original plant removed 50% of the pollutants from the wastewater coming into it. A secondary treatment process was added in 1970 that raised treatment efficiency to 95%. A general plant capacity expansion was completed in 1980. A solids processing complex was added in 1990, and in 1995 a Sequential Batch Reactor was added for nitrogen reduction. The City of Norfolk Wastewater Plant at 610 East Monroe Avenue currently receives 3.5 million gallons of wastewater per day for treatment.

The Water Pollution Control Plant staff of ten employees maintain the plant processes and equipment, manage a solids application program, and conduct an industrial wastewater monitoring program. Our laboratory conducts daily treatment process monitoring tests, and discharge compliance monitoring tests. We also provide testing services to neighboring communities.

The performance of the plant is monitored by the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality, under regulations delegated to it by the Environmental Protection Agency. Those regulations include an NPDES permit that regulates the quality of water discharged to the Elkhorn River.

Waste water treatment is considered to be one of the most important advances for public health in the last 200 years. It has prevented an untold number of diseases and plagues and saved countless lives.

Protection of community health and environmental stewardship will always be the goal at the City of Norfolk Water Pollution Control Plant.