



# Pipeline Express

Provide high-quality water and exceptional services to the people and communities we support.

## Celebrating the Extraordinary Efforts Behind the New Water Treatment Plant

By Jodi Wallin

With acceptance testing for the new treatment plant nearing completion and SPRWS preparing to take full responsibility for operations from Jacobs, it's time to recognize the extraordinary work of our staff who made this milestone possible.

Since spring, production staff have been balancing two major responsibilities: keeping the old plant running and preparing for the transition to the new one. Most staff committed about 10 hours of training each week on top of their regular jobs to make sure they were ready.

"Everyone in production was doing two to three times the normal amount of work," said Eric Noe, assistant project manager for the new plant. Eric stepped in as project manager during startup while Will Menkhaus was away on paternity leave. Will has led the project since the design-build planning phase began more than three

years ago and will remain plant project manager until acceptance testing is complete. At that point, Eric will take over as plant project manager until all remaining work, (including demolition of the old plant, construction of the new lab and water quality areas, the control room for operators, and new electrician offices), is finished by the end of 2027.

The new plant was brought online on July 8. Operators Alec McCusky and David Nusser worked that initial start-up. The old plant stopped operations on August 17 and Tait Tellefsen and Jeff Gehring worked to bring it through its last shut down.

### Training and Transition

Since spring, water quality specialists have been training on the new systems and learning additional testing methods for ozone and hydrogen peroxide.

Operators ran the old plant during their regular shifts while training on the new plant in their off hours.

When water first began flowing from the new plant, treatment operators immediately stepped in to run it as experts side by side with Jacobs staff while still operating the old plant. During the day shift, operators split responsibilities between plants. At night, Treyson Davis and Renee Oelrich did double duty, operating both plants simultaneously.

Lead Operator Paul Rice coordinated low-flow tests of the old plant to ensure a smooth transition, worked through the startup process with staff, and reviewed deliverables and Standard Operating Procedures. Cedric Kenfack Dongmo, working as a treatment plant operator during this period, developed full operational knowledge of both plants in treatment and pumping operations.

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# Extraordinary Efforts Applauded

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Aaron Erickson was responsible for asset management and tagging of the new plant's assets and documentation.

## Going Above and Beyond

The new plant has touched every corner of the production team's work. Just weeks after the plant went online, the city experienced a cyberattack. Although the SCADA system was not compromised, additional manual monitoring was required to ensure that was the case. Todd Freking and Alec McCusky put in extra hours to manually verify system integrity, while pumping operators were trained to monitor network alerts and traffic logs.

Meanwhile, Jeff Gehring learned the new lime system while continuing to operate the old one. Maintenance crews moved sludge between solid control clarifiers, cleaned and prepared new systems for inspection, and readied the old plant for upcoming demolition.

Paul Scott and the chemical handling team learned new chemical feed pump systems while continuing to work with the old equipment. They also managed additional chemical deliveries for the new plant.

The lab staff also assisted the Jacobs team in analyzing treatment process samples to verify that the new systems were meeting water quality goals.

Blake Castagneri's proactive approach and technical expertise were instrumental in addressing persistent issues with the analyzer signal output, titrant



Newly painted 72-inch pipes bring raw water into the treatment plant.

concentration, and flow stability issues with the online hydroxide and total alkalinity analyzer. His attention to detail, responsiveness, and collaborative effort have helped stabilize the critical analyzer performance for proper lime dosing adjustment during the acceptance testing period.

The Vadenais crews helped with sludge valve operations, conduit prep, and system water level monitoring and even responded to a pipe break earlier this spring. They also cleaned the new and old flocs for the transition in September.

Our electricians were instrumental long before construction began. Since 2022, they've been isolating old systems and decommissioning buildings slated for demolition. As new buildings rose, they

integrated new systems into existing infrastructure while keeping operations running. This was in addition to their normal work on pumping station upgrades, administration building renovations, and emergency responses.

## Leadership and Oversight

Production Division Manager Che Fei Chen has worked with every team to ensure training was possible. She ensured that water quality met regulatory standards in addition to the standards for the Partnership for Safe Drinking Water. She has made sure that any issues were identified and addressed during acceptance testing. She is also responsible for approving the daily acceptance reports.

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# Recognizing the People Who Made It Happen

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## Recognizing Our Team

The following staff went above and beyond to make the new treatment plant a reality:

**Che Fei Chen**, Production Division Manager

**Will Menkhaus**, Project Manager

**Eric Noe**, Assistant Project Manager

**Justine Roe**, Water Quality Supervisor

**Steve Evanson and Paul Scott**, Production Supervisor II

**Henrich Fox**, Production Supervisor I

**Todd Freking**, SCADA Manager

**Paul Rice**, Lead Operator

**Tait Tellefson, Renee Oelrich, David**

**Nusser, Alec McCusky, and Treyson**

**Davis**, Treatment Operators

**Jeremy Erickson and Alexis Rossow**, Water Quality Specialist III

**Sarah Brown, James Brown, and Blake Castagneri**, Water Quality Specialist II

**Dakota Fey**, Water Lab Aide

**Aaron Erickson**, Water Utility Tech. III

**Jon Falardeaux and Dick Keeney**, Lead Electricians

**Travis Tveit, Alexandria Robertson,**

**Cedric Kenfack Dongmo, Tristen**

**Magdziarz, and Dan Salinas**, Pumping Operators

**Jeff Gehring, Rob Ralston, Greg**

**Thompson, Jon Henrickson, Steve**

**Schoenecker, and Matt Chernugal**, Maintenance Worker II

**Timothy Scott**, Toolmaker

**Andrew Magdziarz**, Chemical Specialist II

**Corey Horvath**, Chemical Specialist I

**Nick Padowski**, Maintenance Worker I

**Mike Knutson**, Supply System Field Supervisor

**Kevin Romero**, Supply Supervisor II

**Jon Beck**, Supply Supervisor I

**Adan Moreno-Paramo, Ryan Travis,**

**Jake O'Donnell, Chris Robinson, and**

**Erik Sorenson**, Water Utility Worker I

**Coni Cassidy**, Office Assistant III

This achievement represents years of work, dedication, and collaboration across the entire production team. Thank you to everyone who made this transition smooth and successful.



The new lime building towers over the tops of the clarifier domes to the right at the new treatment plant.

# SAFETY PICNIC SLATED FOR OCTOBER 7

By Tom Miller

Get ready, SPRWS team — our Fall Safety Day Picnic is just around the corner! Make sure to attend from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Tuesday, October 7.

Preparations are already in full swing to serve up a delicious meal and celebrate the hard work you put in every day to keep Saint Paul Regional Water a safe place to work.

Safety is something we all create together — and time and again, we hear stories of employees going the extra mile to watch out for one another. This picnic is a chance to take a well-deserved break, enjoy great food, and celebrate our shared commitment to safety.

On the Menu:

- Pulled Pork
- Chicken
- Hearty sides
- And of course... your desserts!

## Best Dessert Contest

Our popular Best Dessert Contest is back! Show off your baking or cooking skills, impress your coworkers, and compete for prizes. Don't miss the chance to share your favorite recipe with the team.

## Volunteers Needed

This picnic wouldn't happen without your help. We need volunteers to:

- Set up tables, chairs, and games
- Serve food
- Help with clean-up

If you can lend a hand, contact Richelle Nicosia — your support makes this day possible!

## Meet Our Vendors

Take advantage of the great resources available during the event:

**Wallman Optical** – Order your safety glasses (bring a prescription less than 2 years old).

**Midwest Safety Counselors** – Chat with Scott Schoenberger about future safety training you'd like to see offered.

**USA BlueBook** – Meet Rhonda Lease and explore equipment and supplies for the lab, plant, and field.

## For Field Personnel

Meals will be provided even if you can't attend in person.

This Fall Safety Day Picnic is more than a meal — it's a celebration of teamwork, safety, and community. Mark your calendars, bring your best dessert, and join us for food, fun, and connection.

## Friday, October 17

**Chet's Shoes** – Stop by between 6 a.m. – 10 a.m. to get the boots you need for the job site and the upcoming winter season. They are not part of the Safety Day event due to a scheduling conflict.

# Evacuation Drill to Vadnais Campus to Take Place on October 7

By Tom Miller

On the morning of October 7, we will hold an evacuation drill. McCarrons campus staff will relocate from 1900 Rice Street to our Vadnais campus at 85 Vadnais Blvd in Vadnais Heights. Once there, we will complete an accountability check to ensure all employees are accounted for. Division managers may designate certain employees to remain at 1900 Rice Street to minimize disruption to operations.

Employees will be notified of the drill through Everbridge and our intercom system. Please acknowledge the Everbridge alert when you receive it so we can confirm

that notifications are reaching everyone.

This drill is part of our ongoing efforts to ensure we can respond effectively in the event of a hazardous chemical release. This is a planned exercise, giving you time to prepare and understand your role. The drill is intended to be low stress and an opportunity for learning. Carpooling to the Vadnais campus is encouraged due to limited parking, and all employees should keep their cell phones accessible for communication with supervisors.

Route handouts will be distributed on October 6. Please follow the designated route and proceed directly to the Vadnais campus without stopping. Upon arrival, staff will direct parking and guide you to accountability areas south of the Vadnais Main Building. If weather is poor, accountability will take place in the building's garages.

Questions can be directed to Tom Miller at [Thomas.Miller@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Thomas.Miller@ci.stpaul.mn.us). Thank you for your participation as we work together to be a well-prepared utility.