

Customer Service: Winning your Customers' Support

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TCEQ and You

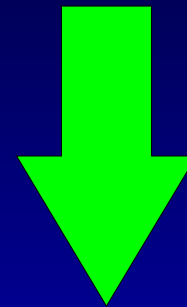
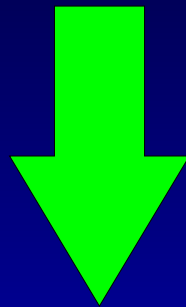
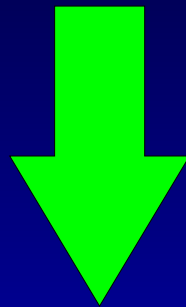
Shared responsibilities

- Protecting the public health
- Providing excellent customer service

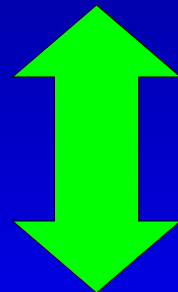


Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

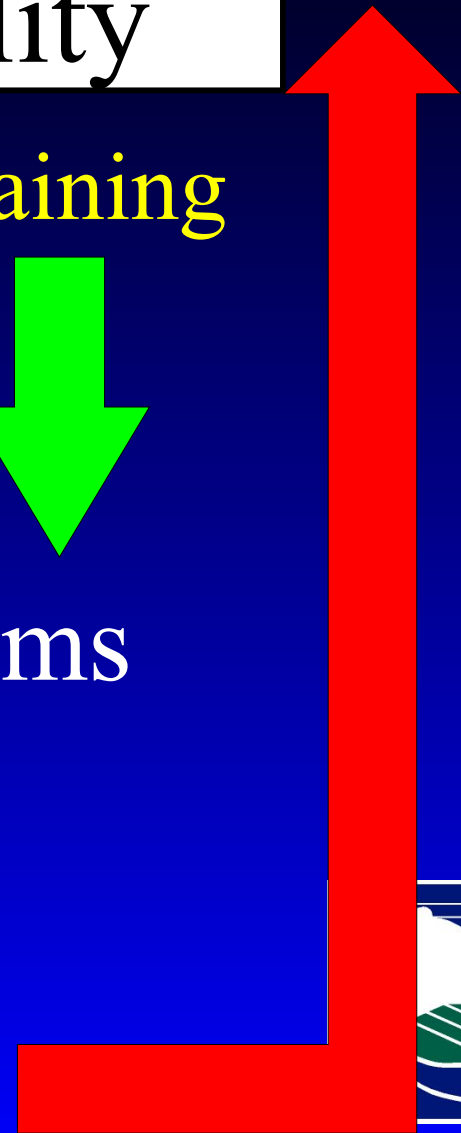
Regulations Guidance Training



Public Water Systems



The Community



Purpose of Regulation

- Customers receive safe and adequate service at reasonable rates
- The utility charges appropriate rates that allow the company
 - ▶ to earn adequate revenue to efficiently administer and operate the water system
 - ▶ To have an opportunity to earn a return on what it has invested in the water utility



Goal and Core Messages

Goal: Enhance the image of and confidence in tap water

- Your tap water is among the safest in the world
- Water professionals are skilled experts dedicated to safeguarding the public health
- Drinking plenty of water each day is beneficial to one's health



Challenges

- Lack of knowledge about tap water treatment, regulation and safety
- Negative media
 - ▶ Water bottlers
 - ▶ Point-of-use device makers
 - ▶ Activists
 - ▶ Niche health magazines



Challenges

Negative perceptions

- Local product
- Quality and abundance not always controlled from a central source
- Historical trust issues



Audiences

- General public
- Parents/Household decision-makers
- Youth/Young Adults being raised in “bottled water culture”
- Media



Steps to Improving Customer Confidence

- Establish water service standards
- Determine appropriate rates
- Resolve billing and collection problems
- Serve appropriate customer notices
- Provide good customer service



Risk Communication

Six Key Considerations in Formulating a Message

- What to say
- Who to say it to
- Why to say it
- Where to say it
- When to say it
- How to say it



Public Relations in a Crisis

Bad Example

- System history:
 - ▶ Long-term iron and manganese problem
 - ▶ Posted Boil Water Notices but never rescind
 - ▶ **IGNORED** customer concerns
“The water is just like that”



Public Relations in a Crisis

Bad Example

- Radiochemical violation occurred
 - ▶ Would not notify “troublemakers”
 - ▶ Legislative representatives involved
 - ▶ Members yelling at board



Public Relations in a Crisis

Good Example

- March 31, 2004: Catastrophic failure at Trinity River Authority (TRA) Central Regional Wastewater System Plant



Sequence of Events

- **11:30 am** - Press learned of breaking story after manholes at golf course began to overflow
- **12:00 pm** - First news helicopter flew in low over the junction box; TRA's Public Information Officer manned the phones and prepared to conduct on-camera interviews
- **By early afternoon**, every local newspaper and television station had sent a reporter to TRA's General office



First Response

TRA's public information office immediately began preparing a media package with the goal of educating and informing the public concerning potential wastewater releases.





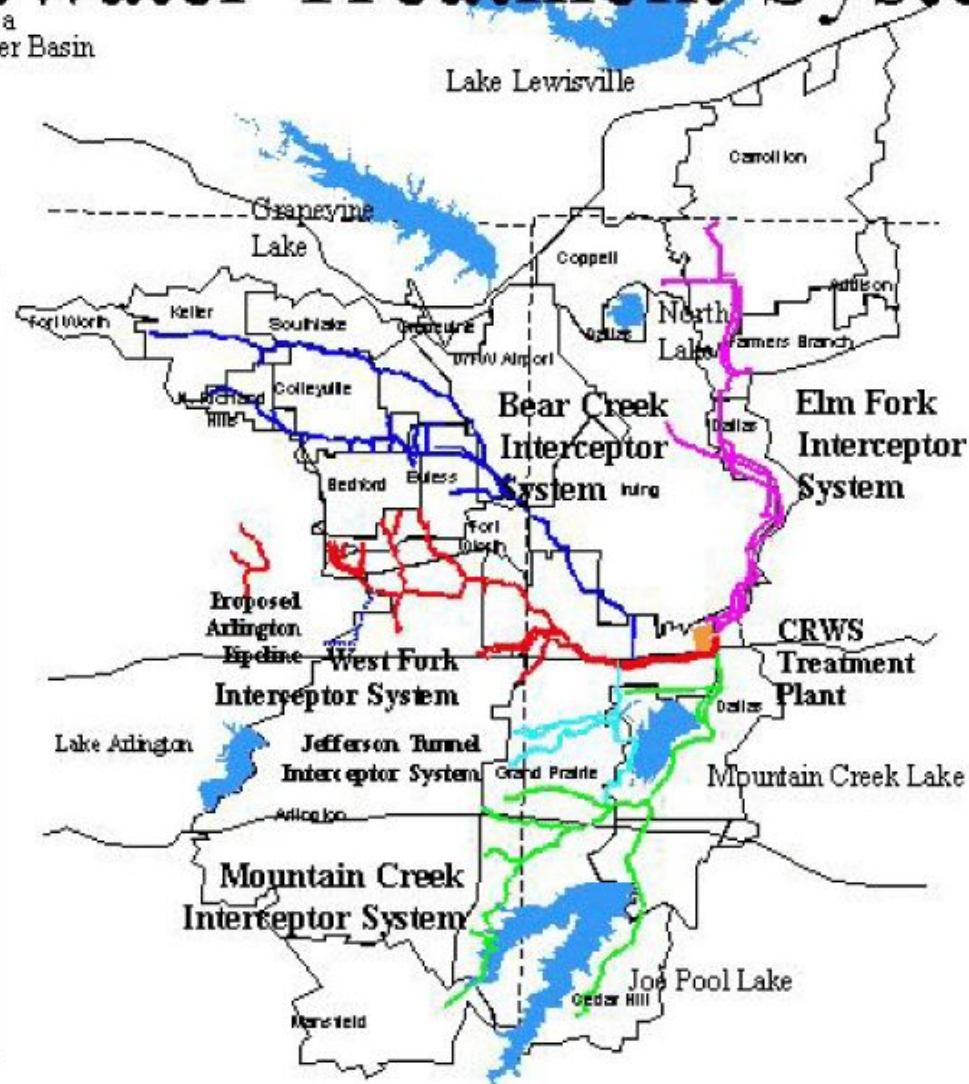
Central Regional Wastewater Treatment System

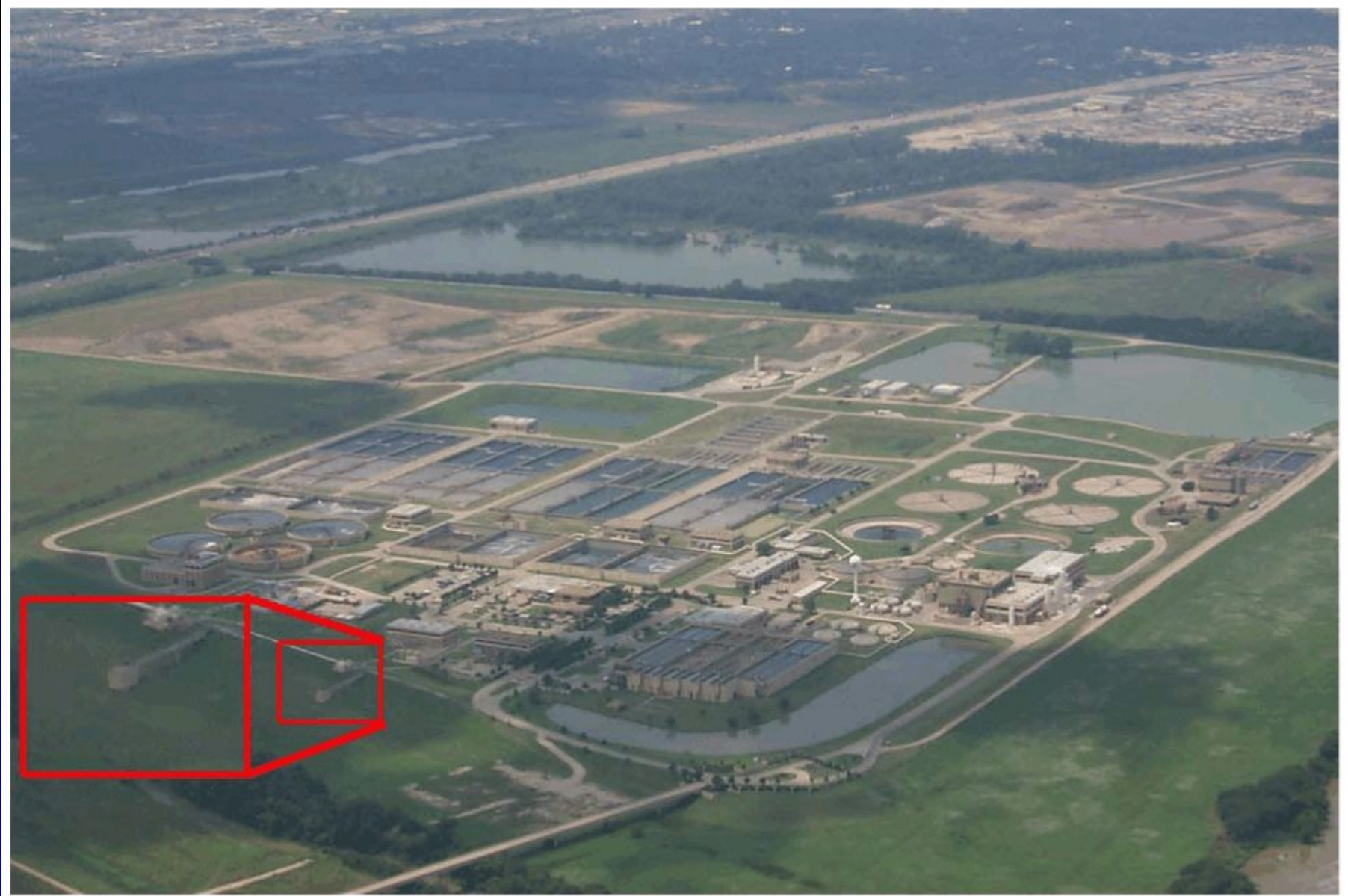


Service Area
Trinity River Basin

Contracting Parties

Irving	1957
Grand Prairie	1957
Farmers Branch	1957
Dallas	1957
Carrollton	1967
Arlington	1973
Bedford	1973
Eules	1973
D/FW Airport	1973
Mansfield	1973
Grapevine	1974
Colleyville	1975
N. Richland Hills	1975
Hurst	1975
Coppell	1976
Fort Worth	1976
Keller	1984
Duncanville	1984
Cedar Hill	1985
Southlake	1988
Addison	1996





Key Points

Press release

- Brief summary of the early morning events
- Background information on the facility
- Steps currently being taken to remedy the situation
- Assurances that TRA would take responsibility for environmental monitoring



Results?

- News coverage was accurate and informative
- Press was positive in nature, depicting the Authority hard at work to complete repair and following up with environmental clean up and monitoring



Keys to Success

- Train and educate staff
- Develop and establish quality assurance measures



Benefits of Training

Prepared workforce

- Improve treatment process
- Recognize any “errors”
- Quickly react to emergency situations
- Become better informed to communicate with the public



Quality Assurance Measures

- Identify your customer needs, expectations, and “Extras” that lead to delivery of Excellent Customer Service
- Develop a quality assurance checklist
- Make changes as appropriate with feedback and discussion



Risk Communication

- Trust is the most important factor in risk perception
- Customers trust is determined by:
 - ▶ Your honesty and openness
 - ▶ Your empathy and caring
 - ▶ Your competence
- Other factors include whether the risk is voluntary, related to a benefit, or shared



Questions?

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