

News & Updates from  
Des Moines Water Works  
**JANUARY 2019**

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**THINK DOWNSTREAM**

## Water Regionalization Update

**D**es Moines Water Works has been an independent water utility since 1919. For 100 years, it has provided Des Moines with safe and abundant drinking water that has allowed the city to flourish. Since 1934, Des Moines Water Works has been providing drinking water to central Iowa communities outside of the city of Des Moines, helping the entire region grow and providing savings through economies of scale.

While Des Moines Water Works currently acts as the primary regional producer of water, we believe current and future challenges for producing water could be better met through expanded representation and involvement in decision-making, rate-setting, and capital planning, and by more equitably sharing costs and spreading the assumption of risk among the people and governments of the region.

In recent years, Des Moines Water Works has worked alongside its suburban wholesale customers to find appropriate ways that they could be included in important ratemaking and planned infrastructure decisions. Over the past two years, these discussions have been formalized and professionally facilitated by FCS Group of Redmond, Washington, with the goal of providing a pathway to create a regional water production authority for central Iowa that maximizes water resource management.

The formal discussions between three local independent water utilities (Des Moines Water Works, Urbandale Water Utility and West Des Moines Water Works) and surrounding communities have been beneficial. Each community and entity brings its own unique perspective and specific needs to the table, and after spending hundreds of hours listening and discussing these important issues, we are all more aware of each community's needs regarding water now and into the future. At the same time, other communities and water producers are still actively pursuing new water production expansion of their own, which only complicates matters even more.

The good news is that the lines of communication between all parties remain open and productive. Des Moines Water Works will continue to invest time and resources to find a solution that will benefit the community at large. Safe and abundant drinking water is not just a necessity for continued economic growth in our area, but it is a vital necessity for life itself.

While an acceptable model for expanded regional governance of and participation in water production in central Iowa has yet to be developed, Des Moines Water Works remains committed to working with all parties interested in exploring ways to increase participation and representation in the governance of water production.

As we continue to explore water production solutions for the region, we will keep you updated on public meetings and important information. View information from the process thus far at: [www.dmww.com/about-us/board-of-trustees/central-iowa-regional-water](http://www.dmww.com/about-us/board-of-trustees/central-iowa-regional-water).

## 2019 Utility Goals

**D**es Moines Water Works staff has identified areas of focus for the utility in 2019, covering various aspects of the utility, including: 1) employee safety, 2) water treatment efficiencies, which will in turn reduce chemical expenses, and 3) workforce planning to prepare for a projected retirement "cliff" in the coming years.

These goals are important to ensure the utility continues to operate safely and efficiently, and maintains critical institutional knowledge held by many long-tenured employees. Des Moines Water Works recognizes focused work in these areas is necessary to continue providing quality water and service to our customers well into the future. Quarterly updates will be reported to the Board of Water Works Trustees and published on [www.dmww.com](http://www.dmww.com).

# DMWW Calls on (Old and New) Friends for Telemetry Assistance

**D**es Moines Water Works (DMWW) in some situations uses secured radio telemetry to send information from remote sites to the Control Center. This information is used to monitor various attributes of remote sites so staff can be alerted to any problems and ensure systems are running optimally.

In recent months, DMWW experienced periodic and sometimes total failure of the radio system that communicates to several facilities and water tower sites.

DMWW employees worked diligently for some time to try to remedy the issue. When no solution could be found, staff reached out to radio sales representatives and technical resources to assist with the problem. In addition, Des Moines Police (DMPD) radio department, Polk County Emergency Management, and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) were also contacted to help find the interference.

That's when a relatively unknown volunteer group, Polk County Amateur Radio Emergency Service, was brought in for assistance.

The mission of Polk County Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) is to provide emergency radio communications for Polk County and surrounding communities when officially activated by an authorized agency. ARES is comprised of 76 volunteers and is governed by the FCC Code of Federal Regulations. An FCC requirement for maintaining radio spectrum for amateur radio is providing service to the public.

"The primary focus of our communications efforts are surrounding emergency response – specifically to augment public service communications capabilities for the various jurisdictions within Polk County," said Scott Kirstein, Emergency Coordinator, Polk County ARES. "Fortunately, Polk County is pretty well equipped and has considerable resources to utilize for most emergencies, so we are not needed very often for the real thing; however, we do provide routine support for community events, like the Des Moines Marathon, Living History Farms Race, Fight for Air Climb, to name a few."

A total of eight operators from Polk County ARES assembled to track down the signal interference plaguing DMWW over the course of about three weeks. DMWW, DMPD radio department, and the FCC continued to assist during the workday, while the amateur volunteers worked the late shift.

After a process of elimination (finding out for sure what was not causing the interference, to determine where it could be), the volunteer group pinpointed the signal to defunct equipment on top of a downtown Des Moines building that was causing the unintentional interference. The team contacted the owner of the license associated with the equipment and got permission to disable it, and DMWW confirmed the signal interference was gone.

Collectively, the Polk County ARES volunteer team spent approximately 70 hours to assist DMWW.

"We are just a handful of folks who are willing to help out if we can. We heard of a need, thought maybe we could help, and caught a couple of breaks to solve a problem," said Scott Kirstein.

After the experience, DMWW has a more robust radio system with encryption and a stronger relationship with several entities who can assist if a similar problem happens in the future.

Thank you to DMPD, Polk County, FCC, and the volunteer amateur radio group in locating the signal interference and working to find solutions for DMWW's communications systems, which are a vital element in our work to deliver safe drinking water to 500,000 central Iowa customers.



*A Polk County ARES volunteer working to isolate the source of the signal in Downtown Des Moines.*