

ALABAMA ONSITE WASTEWATER ASSOCIATION

# AOWA news

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Vol. 26 No. 4 Fall 2020



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AOWA 2021 Annual Meeting & Trade Show at  
Davis Farm, Phenix City, AL

The AOWA Launches Its New ONLINE  
Continuing Education Training

and more.

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This Quarterly News Magazine is a publication of the Alabama Onsite Wastewater Association (AOWA).

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*On the cover: Chris Gulley, a member of the AOWA board, is featured in the article, "Going the Extra Mile When It Matters Most" beginning on page 6.*

# From the AOWA President



Happy Fall Everyone!

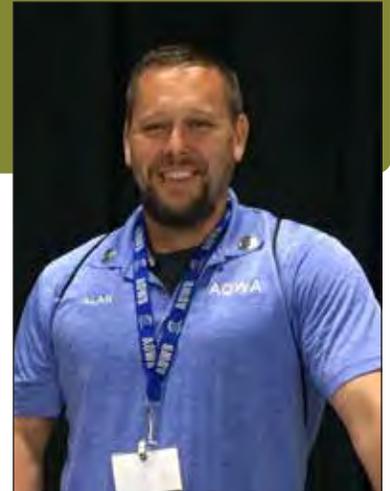
I hope you and your loved ones are doing well and staying safe during these unprecedented times. Please rest assured the AOWA is diligently working to provide a voice for you as a wastewater industry professional.

The AOWA has been working hard over the past few months scheduling and planning in-person continuing education and licensing classes in partnership with the Homebuilders Association of Alabama (HBAA), the North Alabama Homebuilding Academy (NAHA) and In the Works. We are truly grateful for these partnerships and hope that those of you who have taken a class over the summer were pleased. Though most of these classes have now passed, there are still two in-person classes remaining for the year. The final in-person Advanced Installer, Level II class will take place December 1-4 in Huntsville, Alabama. The final in-person Continuing Education class will take place December 15-16 at Jon Archer Agriculture Center in Mobile, Alabama. This class was originally scheduled in October; however, hurricane Zeta forced us to reschedule. Seating for these classes is limited, so please register in advance by calling Rhonda Freeman at the AOWA office. Our goal is to provide the best education possible, while keeping you all safe. Please know that the AOWA staff and its education partners have been working to ensure proper COVID-19 protocols are being followed at all class sites. These protocols include the use of face masks and social distancing practices. Please note we will not be accepting walk-ins for the remainder of the year. All classes are being filled in accordance with regulations specific to each site and to the state of Alabama.

Speaking of education, are you still in need of continuing education credits for 2020? The AOWA recently launched its Continuing Education Online Training, allowing licensees to view a library of online videos based on an individual's license level. These online videos are available NOW, so get signed up today! You can register for this training online or by calling the AOWA office.

Mark your calendars for the 34th Annual AOWA Trade Show! This year's show will take place April 22-23 at

*Alan Astin*  
AOWA President



Davis Farm in Phenix City, Alabama. I'm excited to be able to provide a space for us to gather that will keep us compliant with COVID-19 protocol. This year's show will feature outdoor continuing education classes, exhibitor booths, field demonstrations and much more! We are looking forward to gathering together again for another great trade show!

Helping Hands Across Alabama continues its efforts to assist those in need of septic installations and repairs. In 2020, the program completed six projects with various donations and volunteers providing assistance. THANK YOU to those that have donated equipment and/or volunteered their time. Without you these projects would not be possible. If you would like to volunteer for an upcoming Helping Hands project, and are NOT an AOWA member, you can receive a complimentary membership good for one year. You would be responsible for renewing the membership once the first initial year is up. To volunteer your time and receive this complimentary membership, please contact Abby Burns-Ashley at the AOWA office. We look forward to working with you and appreciate your time and commitment to this worthwhile project.

Are you a member of the AOWA? Has your membership lapsed? We hope you will consider joining or renewing your membership with us! Don't miss out on all the member benefits. A membership form can be found within this issue and on the website.

We know these are trying times, and we need to lean on each other now more than ever. Please know the AOWA is here for YOU! Our goal is to provide the best resources and utmost support to our members and other industry professionals.

As always, thank you for your efforts in keeping the AOWA a successful, supportive association for its members and others in the onsite wastewater Industry.

Take Care, Alan





Scott Harris, M.D., M.P.H.  
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

October 19, 2020

Dear AOWA Members:

First, let me thank you for your dedication to the onsite wastewater industry as we all transition into this world of uncertainty amid the Coronavirus pandemic. ADPH has been working hard this summer making the best out of a bad situation as well. Our inspectors are all anxious to be able to get back to some sense of normalcy, as I expect you are too.

As you may be aware, we are currently in the comment phase of a revision for our Septage Rules which regulate permission for the application of septage on land sites. This revision will also incorporate existing regulations for septic tank pumpers that are currently found in our Onsite Sewage Treatment and Disposal rules.

ADPH would like to encourage all members to become familiar with the proposed rules and, as always, if you have any questions feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

Leigh Willis, Director  
Community Environmental Protection

# Going the Extra Mile When It Matters Most

## A look at Chris Gulley's life of public service



### **Chris Gulley**

*Owner*

Gulley Construction, LLC

*District 2 Representative*

AOWA Board of Directors

*Chairman - Professional Installer*

AOWB Board of Directors

Chris Gulley has been in public service his whole life. He grew up in Jackson County, Alabama, in the city of Stevenson. His father was in business for 35 years, building bridges and roads. When he retired in 1980, he started doing small scale excavation and hauling work. This is where Chris first gained his knowledge of the industry. Though it would have been easy for him to follow in his father's footsteps, Chris saw a different future for himself. His dream was to be a police officer, and with this goal in mind, Chris focused his education on just that. He studied Criminal Justice at Snead State Community College, attended the Alabama Fire College at Shelton State, and took classes at Jacksonville State

University and Northeast Alabama Community College. Throughout his life, Chris has served in several different job roles. He has worked as a police officer; a fire fighter; a combat engineer in the US Army; is a member of the Scottsboro Jackson County Rescue Squad and was captain of the Bridgeport Rescue Squad for six years. Chris also worked with the Jackson County Healthcare Authority for 12 years, serving nine of those as Chairman of the Board. He has obtained his auctioneer's license; his pilot's license; and is licensed as a general contractor, pumper, installer and manufacturer in both Alabama and Tennessee. Did I mention he is also a plumber? One thing Chris believes in is hard work. He recalls one point in his life where he drove a school bus in the morning, worked construction during the day, and



continued...

served as a police officer at night. Its safe to say Chris is what we call a jack-of-all-trades.

In 2000, Chris started Gulley Construction, the only Advanced Level II installer in Jackson County. Gulley Construction offers excavation, septic installation, soils processing, land clearing, and gravel/topsoil hauling. Chris was the first installer in Alabama to install Infiltrator's ATL sand system; something most people don't know. Chris also has a great appreciation for his employees. "Having a solid team allows me to travel, attend some of the AOWA education sessions, and continue to network around the industry," Chris said. He also enjoys serving as a mentor to those entering the industry. Chris has traveled to job sites, loaned out some of his own trucks, taken his pumper truck to an AOWA class, and continues to make connections throughout the industry. "I like helping people and don't mind traveling to look at a job if someone needs advice," Chris said.

Chris has been a member of the AOWA for over 10 years. "Being a member of the AOWA helps protect the livelihood of your business," Chris said. He joined the AOWA board three years ago as the District 2 representative and Chair of the Helping Hands program, formerly known as the Trac program. Chris has been very involved with

the Helping Hands program in Jackson County, and now brings his passion for the program to the AOWA. In fact, Chris was instrumental in changing the name of the Trac program to the Helping Hands program. He has helped lead five Helping Hands projects per year since joining the board; a number he can now add to his nearly 50 projects completed through the program in Jackson County. "The only way you can make a difference is by being involved," Chris said. "I like helping people and seeing the difference these projects make in their lives." One of his favorite projects was one the team completed for an elderly lady who lived down the street. Chris had an engineer come out to assess the site, and in less than two months was able to install an aerobic drip system for his neighbor through funding of his own. For Chris, this is when all the hard work pays off.

Chris also serves as Chairman of the Alabama Onsite Wastewater Board (AOWB) in the Professional Installer position. Chris is grateful to Melissa Hines for all the work she is doing with the AOWB and to Marc Geiger and Roger Youngblood for their work on the Helping Hands Committee.

Education is very important to Chris. He recalls the days when receiving your license consisted of a one-day class at the Holiday Inn. Fast forward to



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present day, Chris is enthusiastic about the new education program the AOWA recently put in place. He agrees the program was missing that onsite element that students really need. Chris was able to develop a Field Day program for those taking the Basic Installer class in Huntsville that would allow him to take the students to his business and show them how to install a pump in person. "I'm happy to see the direction the education program is headed," Chris said. "It's

important for those taking the class to see real life scenarios and what its like being out in field."

Though Chris stays busy with his business and serving on two boards, he is sure to make time for some leisure activities as well. Chris enjoys spending time with his family, camping, off-roading, flying his plane, coaching little league, and riding his motorcycle. In ten years, Chris would like to retire from his business, handing it off to his children. After retirement, he would like to have an equipment yard on his land, practice his auctioneering, do some traveling, and may even run for State Senate.

It's safe to say Chris Gulley is fully dedicated to being a positive spokesman for all that the AOWA stands for. His time and commitment spent in various capacities shows his true love for the industry and for those that serve alongside him. "The AOWA should be a voice for its members," Chris said. "And that's what I strive to be for our members on a daily basis."



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# 5 Smart Money Moves to Prosper During a Financial Crisis

By: Ami Kassar, Pumper Magazine, October 2020

*The coronavirus has turned the business world on its rear. But there are ways to strengthen your wastewater company's position in tough times.*

There's no denying that a societal crisis, especially a global one, is a game changer in many ways, particularly in the business community. Plenty of business people -entrepreneurs and otherwise - are dealing with real pain and life- and business-threatening situations. You can hope for the best.

Yet business owners, in particular those whose current and future prospects aren't completely bad off, may take advantage of whatever opportunities have arisen in these strange times. That's not to say you should prey on the misery of others, but there are some things you should be doing at this point that could pay off in the future.

## HERE ARE FIVE FISCAL MOVES TO CONSIDER.

### 1. Restructure existing debt

Ideally, you don't want to be taking on any more debt these days if you can help it - and that is a big "if" for a lot of businesses. Still, there's plenty of opportunity to reduce your monthly payments.

Considering how life is always changing, your business might be viewed vastly differently now by lenders. For example, perhaps you're generating increased amounts of collateral, cash flow or credit. Even with an extended slowdown associated with a pandemic, your products or services are likely still in demand.

Refinancing should be on your table. Even shaving a percentage point or two is going to cut your monthly debt service, which will put more money in your coffers. And in these troubled times, cash is king more than ever.

### 2. Take a look at traditional SBA programs

Unlike in the past, you might now be eligible for a U.S. Small Business Administration-backed loan - or a better conventional bank loan.

The SBA got a lot of attention because of the current CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security) Act and the Paycheck Protection Program, but the agency's regular lending programs should interest you. Do note that in its regular programs, the SBA doesn't make the loans - it only backs them for a select group of lenders.

The flagship 7(a) program offers low rates and fees and comes with counseling and education, if so desired, as well as generous repayment terms. In addition, lower down payments, flexible requirements regarding overhead and no collateral may also figure into the equation.

### 3. Consider lender loyalty and request restructuring

At the very least, you need to conduct a debt review to consider financing options as they stand now.

That said, you have to be careful. Your current lender won't want you to go, especially if the current arrangement is lucrative in their favor. They may try scare tactics, claiming you'll lose flexibility if you change lenders or that you may risk running out of money.

Resist that pressure. Think of it this way: What's more important - your business or your lender? Your lender is certainly looking out for itself first. You must, too.

continued...

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And remember, it's always possible your lender could rework your deal, which could save you from awkward moments.

#### 4. Review all expenditures

More capital isn't always the answer. Sometimes, it's better to make do with less.

Entrepreneurs generally don't want to scale back their operations because they're too worried about growth. But few businesses grow in a straight line. There are ups and downs along the way, and now you might just want to minimize the damage.

Steps you might take include deferring capital expenditures or deferring or reducing lease payments and noncritical vendor payments, if possible. By reaching out proactively to landlords, vendors and other contractor holders, you might be able to craft some breathing room if this is seen as necessary.

On the unpleasant side, you could think about furloughing some employees or even pay cuts (if you choose the latter, make sure you cut your pay as well).

#### 5. Give yourself some credit

This advice - which isn't heeded nearly often enough - applies for both when your company is doing well and when it's struggling.

You should open a line of credit.

A credit line gives you peace of mind because you have a ready reserve to tap. And it gives you a great deal of flexibility. Say you get a short-term opportunity to buy a stockpile of key supplies or product inventory at a ridiculously low price. With a credit line, you can take advantage of that option.

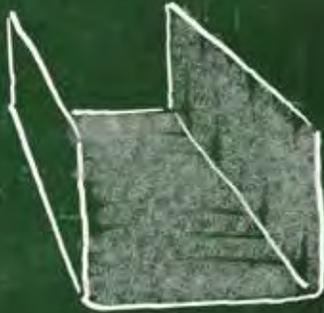
Remember that you only pay interest on a credit line if you borrow from it - and there's no requirement that you do that. The credit line can sit there untouched, if need be.

#### STRATEGIC THINKING

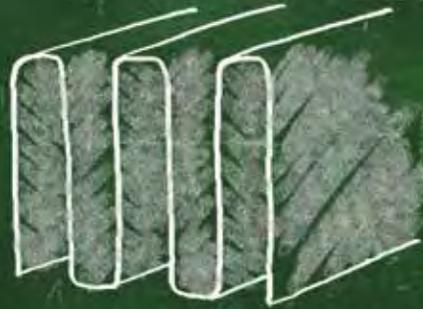
In summary, now's a time when your goal may well be simply to ride out the next few months. That's fine. Yet riding out the next few months isn't the same as doing nothing. By being proactive, you can not only make the most of a bad time, but position yourself for the inevitable rebound.



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# News from the AOWB



## An Important Update from the AOWB

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for all you do for the people of the State of Alabama. I'm certain most of you have heard me say "you keep our lights on at home", and this is a very true statement. Every employee of my staff feels this way as well. The Alabama Onsite Wastewater Board (AOWB) is a self-funded agency and receives no monies from the general fund. This means **YOU** as a licensee pay for all the expenses associated with the day-to-day operations of the AOWB, as well as our salaries and benefits. For that, we want to say Thank You!

Since the inception of the AOWB in 1999, the license fees have never increased. In the beginning, some were optimistic that we may have an opportunity to decrease the fees; however, that is not the case. Due to the cost of operations, the need for more compliance officers, and overall "cost of living" associated with running a regulatory agency, the AOWB had no choice but to vote to increase license fees. The new license fee schedule will go in effect January 13, 2021. **IF YOU RENEW BEFORE DECEMBER 31, YOU WILL NOT BE CHARGED THE NEW FEES!**

### FEES INCREASE CHART:

- Basic Installer License will increase from \$200 annually to \$300 annually
- Advanced Level I License will increase from \$300 annually to \$400 annually
- Advanced Level II License will increase from \$500 annually to \$600 annually
- Pumper License will increase from \$200 annually to \$300 annually
- Portable License will increase from \$200 annually to \$300 annually
- Manufacturer License will increase from \$200 annually to \$300 annually
- Manufacturer Level II License will increase from \$200 annually to \$300 annually

As always, each additional license you hold is \$100 per license.

For example: John Doe holds a basic installer license, a pumper license and a manufacturer license. He pays \$300 for basic installer, \$100 for pumper and \$100 for manufacturer, for a total of \$500 before December 31 (October - December is the renewal season).

All licenses are to be renewed by December 31 of each year. If you have not renewed by January 1 there is a \$100 late fee per each license you hold.

All licenses that are **NOT** renewed by February 16 of each year have been charged a \$250 penalty fee. **YOU WILL NO LONGER HAVE TO PAY THE PENALTY FEE IF YOU HAVE NOT RENEWED BY FEBRUARY 16.**

Shockingly, there are a lot of licensees who pay that fee every year. You will still be responsible for the \$100 late fee per license if you fail to renew by January 1. Surprisingly, I have not received much negative feedback on this; most say their licenses are worth it. I know this isn't the best news to receive; however, the Board and I deemed the increase

continued...

# News from the AOWB



appropriate in order to keep the industry's finances intact, officers on the road, and to have the opportunity to add an additional officer within the next 18 months.

## QUALIFYING TO BECOME LICENSED:

For years, there has been talk of an apprenticeship program through the AOWB. Though there will not be an apprenticeship program, an individual desiring to become licensed as a basic installer, pumper, or portable toilet operator will have to complete an application to see if they qualify to attend the training. Why? This decision was made in response to complaints received from licensees throughout the state in reference to the unprofessionalism or lack of experience in the field. For years, people that have taken first-time training and passed the test, still could not properly install a septic tank, pump a septic tank, or perform an inspection on a septic tank. Individuals need some type of experience to install or pump a septic tank, or to service portable toilets. Yes, a lot of information is taught and retained; however, once

they get started it's a whole new ball game. Each and every install is different. You run into unique situations all the time. When systems fail, veteran installers/pumpers see why – inexperience.

A potential candidate should contact the AOWB **BEFORE** attending training to obtain the application to qualify for a license (the form will be on our website before January 1, 2021). If Melissa wants to become licensed as a pumper, she will contact the AOWB to request an application to qualify (or download it off the website). This form should be completed and returned to the AOWB Administrative Office. If qualifications have been met on the application, the applicant will receive a letter informing them that they qualify to attend first-time basic installer training or first-time pumper/portable toilet training. An individual cannot just contact a sponsor of education for training, attend training, and then test. The applicant has to have 12 months of work experience for the basic installer (the experience is not limited to only installing tanks) and six months of experience for

the pumpers and portable toilet operators. As with any position you hold in the workforce, there is always experience required. We are in process of working on the qualifications now. These new procedures will go in effect January 1, 2021.

2021 is bringing much needed change to the industry to promote the professionalism you all deserve.

I am very humbled and honored to serve the industry to the fullest extent I can, and as always, feel free to contact me at any time.

Kindest Regards to All,



**Melissa Hines**  
*Executive Director*  
Alabama Onsite Wastewater Board  
(334) 353-9250

# Save the Date

## 2021 AOWA Annual Meeting & Trade Show

*The 2021 Trade Show will recognize and honor former AOWA Board member and former Chair of the AOWB, Brent Bradshaw.*

**April 22-23, 2021**  
**Davis Farm, Phenix City, AL**



Originally planned at the Lakepoint State Park Conference Center in March, there were concerns that COVID-19 guidelines and social distancing may prevent or limit participation at the event. **SO, WE ARE GOING OUTSIDE!** Tents, Outdoor Exhibits and Field Demonstrations on over 30 acres of land will ease issues related to COVID-19 social distancing restrictions. It was a unanimous vote of the AOWA Board of Directors to move the meeting to an outdoor space.

Alan Astin, President of the AOWA and owner of Davis Concrete, has generously offered his farm and open space to host the 2021 Annual Meeting and Trade Show.

**Put the dates on your calendar and watch for more details to come!**

### **Continuing Education Classes**

Continuing Education classes will be held under the big tents with over 10 hours of training available Thursday and/or Friday, April 22-23

### **Field Demonstrations**

Field Demonstrations will be available Thursday afternoon, April 22 for attendees to earn continuing education hours. In cooperation with our exhibitors, the Alabama Department of Public Health and AOWA licensed installers, participants will have the opportunity to see equipment, systems, installation and jobsite challenges. These demonstrations will allow for attendees to see first-hand and focus on system installations.

### **Trade Show Exhibitors**

There will be adequate space for exhibitors to bring equipment and supplies so that attendees can see their products close-up and in person. There will be a limited number of interior booths; most exhibits will be located outside on a grassy lawn.



Check out these 2020 photos from Lake Guntersville State Park.



**Join Us for the 2021 Trade Show at DAVIS FARM!**

# The AOWA Launches Its New ONLINE Continuing Education Training

Need Continuing Education hours? Earn them online with the AOWA's new online training videos! The AOWA is developing an extensive continuing education library of videos that will provide AOWB licensees with information and updates for your business and onsite license operations. Some of the educational topics include Business

Profitability, Safety Standards, Risk Management, Onsite Septage Technology and Best Practices.

The videos are packaged based on your license and number of hours needed for your continuing education requirements. After watching the videos there will be a short exam to complete to ensure you have learned the information presented.



## Online Education Pricing

<u>License Level</u>	<u>AOWA Member</u>	<u>Non-Member</u>
Basic Installer (6 hrs.)	\$ 190	\$ 230
Pumper (6 hrs.)	\$ 190	\$ 230
Advanced Level I (8 hrs.)	\$ 250	\$ 295
Advanced Level II (10 hrs.)	\$ 300	\$ 350
Portable Restroom (4 hrs.)	\$ 125	\$ 155
Manufacturer (6 hrs.)	\$ 190	\$ 230

**Registration is available online through the AOWA website or by calling the office at 334-396-3434.**



# THE ALABAMA ONSITE WASTEWATER ASSOCIATION

## ONLINE CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES 2020 REGISTRATION FORM

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

COMPANY NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

MAILING ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL (REQUIRED): \_\_\_\_\_

**INDICATE WHICH CLASS YOU WANT & AOWA MEMBER STATUS BY MARKING THE BOXES**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Basic Installer, Pumper or Manuf. (6 hrs) | <input type="checkbox"/> AOWA MEMBER     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced I (8 hrs)                        | <input type="checkbox"/> AOWA NON-MEMBER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced II (10 hrs)                      |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Portable Restroom Only (4 hrs)            |  |

*Note: Only one licensee per member company is entitled to the AOWA discount. Other licensees at the member company must pay full price.*

**ONLINE CEU COURSE INFORMATION**

Once your registration is received and processed you will receive a link via the email address given above to access the training videos and accompanying completion quizzes for the CEU Online Course for which you have registered. After viewing the videos and passing the accompanying quizzes with an 80%, you will receive your certificate via email and a copy will be sent to the Alabama Onsite Wastewater Board. Please contact Rhonda Freeman at [rfreeman@asginfo.net](mailto:rfreeman@asginfo.net) or 334-396-3434 with questions regarding this registration or payment, and Abby Burns-Ashley at [aburns@asginfo.net](mailto:aburns@asginfo.net) or 334-396-3434 with questions regarding the online classes.

**REGISTRATION FEES:**

Registration includes training material and attendance certification.

Mail Form and Registration Fee (see chart to the right) to:

**AOWA**  
P.O. Box 10  
Lanett, AL 36863

Make check or money order payable to "AOWA".  
There will be no refunds and no transfers.  
There will be a \$30.00 fee for all returned checks. No exceptions!

*Please note: You are not registered until we receive your registration form and payment.*

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# There's Nothing Baffling About Tank Inlet and Outlet Features

By: Jim Anderson and Dave Gustafson, Onsite Installer Magazine, October 2020

*Keep ease of maintenance in mind during the wastewater flow design of the next septic tank you install*

A colleague of ours sent us a photo of the inlet baffle in a septic tank and commented that the baffle design will lead to plugging and sewage backups into the house. While this was good for his pumping business, it meant he got to deal with unhappy homeowners, which is not a good thing.

Baffles are defined as any device installed in a septic tank to retain solids. Often, these are sanitary tees at the inlet and effluent screens at the outlet. In early days, both inlet and outlet baffles were often tees or — as in this case — a baffle built into the tank.

Traveling around the country, we still find states or areas where septic tanks are not equipped with inlet baffles. Usually the comment is made that "inlet baffles are not needed because the wastewater flows directly into the tank."

## INLET AND OUTLET

Inlet baffles perform an important function in the operation of a septic tank. They direct wastewater received from the house downward to the level of the clear zone, dissipating the energy of the incoming flow to prevent turbulence and disruption of the segregation of the scum and sludge layers in the tank. Along with the outlet baffle, the inlet baffle prevents inflow from short-circuiting flow through the tank, allowing time for solids to settle and to maintain the clear zone. Finally, baffles prevent accumulated floating scum from plugging the inlet or outlet.



Outlet baffles today consist of a sanitary tee fitted with effluent screens to ensure larger solids from either the sludge or scum layers are not allowed to move from the tank downstream to impact soil treatment units. Excessive solids and BOD can cause soil treatment trenches to grow excessive biomat and, in some cases, physically plug the soil's ability to accept effluent.

Several other design and operation criteria are important to consider or incorporate when planning a system. Baffles must be resistant to corrosion or decay: They will not function if they are resting in the bottom of the tank.

In the past, a variety of materials were used that did not stand up to the corrosive environment in the tank. Different metal or other materials with metal fasteners did not prove to be durable. There was a strong movement to use cast-in-place baffles in concrete tanks; but due to several factors, they sometimes did not stand up to corrosion. Today what we see most are either cast-in-place or installed sanitary tees.

continued...

The baffle distance above or below the sewage surface is critical for proper operation within the tank in terms of holding the scum layer back and for solids to settle as sludge and provide a clear zone for effluent to be delivered to the soil treatment area. The inlet baffle must extend at least 6 inches below the surface, but not more than 20% of the total liquid depth in low-profile tanks. They should also extend at least 6 inches above the operating surface in the tank. This allows the baffle to do its job of directing flow downward into the tank and to keep any developed scum layer away from the inlet.

The outlet baffle must extend a distance equal to 40% of the liquid depth for rectangular tanks or 35% for cylindrical tanks. For a rectangular tank with an operating depth of 60 inches, the baffle should extend 24 inches. This ensures liquid being delivered to the next component is coming from the clear zone. Similar to the inlet, the baffle should extend at least 6 inches above the liquid surface. This is to keep the scum layer from floating over the top of the baffles, causing plugging or potentially being delivered to the soil treatment area.

### MAINTAIN PROPER VENTING

In the case of cast-in-place inlet baffles as shown in the photo, it is important to have enough space between the inlet pipe and the baffle. The space needed to avoid plugging with toilet paper or other solids is 6 to 12 inches. Anything less and there will be a lot of service visits to unplug the baffle after sewage has backed up into the house.

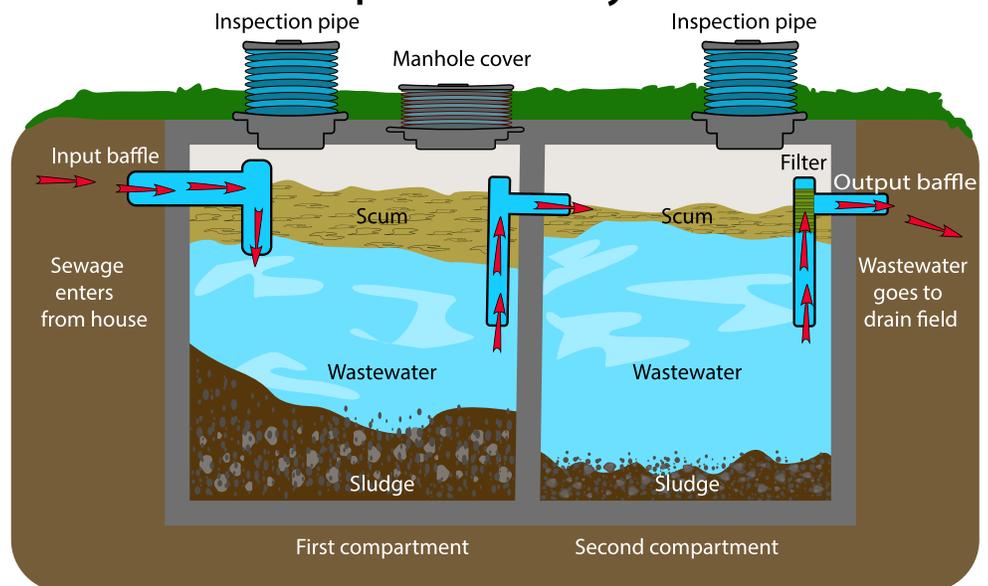
Sanitary tees operate well at the inlet. They direct flow downward and through the tank and are less subject to plugging with toilet paper or the wipes people aren't supposed to flush. The bottom line is that sanitary tees reduce plugging problems when compared to the cast-in-place baffles.

A final important note: For proper venting of the tank back through the house vent, there should be at least 1 inch between the tops of the baffles and the underside of the tank cover. If the gases are not vented properly, there will be corrosion in the concrete around the outlet baffle and the underside of the cover, resulting in the baffles deteriorating and the cover being structurally unsound.

The National Precast Concrete Association has tank design and manufacture standards that should be followed.



## Septic Tank System



# 2021 Licensing Class Schedule

*\*All classes will take place at the Home Builders Association of Alabama office located in Montgomery, AL.*

## **Basic Installer**

February 15-18

May 17-20

August 16-19

## **Advanced Level I**

March 1-4

August 2-5

October 25-28

## **Advanced Level II**

April 19-22

June 14-17

December 6-9

## **Pumper**

January 20-21

April 14-15

July 14-15



**REGISTRATION** for all classes will be available January 2021. Dates and location of classes are subject to change should class registration fail to materialize. Updates to the 2021 class schedule can be found on the AOWA website at [www.aowainfo.org](http://www.aowainfo.org) or by calling the office at **334-396-3434**.



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# Capital Update for October 2020

By: Stephanie Norrell

McMillan & Associates, LLC, a governmental affairs firm representing the AOWA on issues before the Alabama Legislature

When the Alabama Legislature adjourned the abbreviated 2020 Regular Session due to the pandemic, many bills were left unfinished. Although the budgets were addressed, several other high-priority items were not brought up during the last few days due to the difficulties of conducting a legislative session while practicing social distancing. A prime example of this are the two industrial incentive acts that expire in 2020. Unless there is a special session called, those economic development incentives will not be available to recruiters until the Legislature renews them when members return in 2021.

At the time of this writing, it is still unknown if the Governor will call members back to Montgomery for a special session to address these bills and potentially others, such as a COVID-19 liability protection bill and a bill to provide that the stimulus checks Alabamians received this year are not taxable. If the Governor does not call a special session, these issues will certainly be at the forefront for members when they return in February.

Another unanswered question will be how the Legislature will conduct business during the 2021 Regular Session, which begins February 2<sup>nd</sup>. If social distancing is still required, will members

of the public be allowed in the State House to discuss issues with legislators face to face, and view committee hearings and proceedings in person? When the House is in session, members are usually on the floor for debate and votes. Will House members again have to be spread out across several rooms to abide by social distancing guidelines when they are in session? Could they possibly meet somewhere else that offers more space? The pandemic has upended a lot of things in 2020 and the Legislature is no exception.

Looking forward to next year, the AOWA continues to support legislation to increase the maximum fines allowed by the Alabama Onsite Wastewater Board in order to put them in line with other similar state regulatory boards. The legislation also removes the requirement to transfer part of the Board's remaining balance at the end of each fiscal year to the state's General Fund. We plan to pursue this legislation again during the 2021 Regular Session and will keep the AOWA members updated on its progress.



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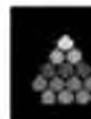
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# What Should Pumpers Expect as the Pandemic Lingers?

By: Jim Anderson Pumper Magazine, October 2020

*The top priorities are to stay safe while working in the field and educate customers about proper septic system care*

As concerns over rising infection rates have led some schools and workplaces to rely on virtual learning and their employees working from home, it has led to numerous questions about potential impacts to the septic systems our industry services. While there is not much information out there yet about impacts or problems, there are a few areas a service provider can pay attention to in order to intercept and prevent problems down the road due to different school, workplace and lifestyle changes.

Before touching on potential system problems, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the most important things a system provider can pay attention to - your personal health and safety. If you are ill and are among the 20% of people who have more serious health problems due to the coronavirus, you will not be able to help anyone for an extended period of time. This makes the wearing and proper use of personal protective equipment as you work even more important. This means cleaning uniforms or clothing every day, showering after work, wearing eye protection and proper gloves, washing hands frequently and using hand sanitizer.

The articles and criteria I have seen all say that using PPE and safety protocols you should already have for your business will protect you from COVID-19, as well as other illnesses. I realize that when working every day around sewage, we all have a tendency to become

a little complacent and not take the risk as seriously as we should. Now more than ever, service providers need to follow good hygiene procedures.

## **TOO MUCH SOAP?**

One specific question I've received about system impacts is whether we should be concerned about increased use of antibacterial soaps - washes and wipes - and whether they can impact the biology of our septic systems, resulting in less bacterial breakdown in sewage tanks; increased solids, with some of those solids carrying over to the drainfield and causing increased biomat development; and potential failure. The short answer to the question is: yes, it is something to be concerned about.

Typically, when I discuss antimicrobial products and cleaners, I have mentioned that normal household use is not a problem. Situations where service providers have indicated there are problems with use are in households where excessive cleaning or cleaners have been used. Examples are when there is an illness in the family or cleaning is done once or twice a week where larger amounts of products are used to clean and disinfect areas of the house such as kitchens and bathrooms.

Based on my household of two and what I have seen from various sources, use of these products has increased dramatically. Of course, overall product usage in some cases has been limited

continued...

due to supply problems, but certainly use of sanitizers and cleaners has increased, as we have all been encouraged to wipe groceries, packages and countertops, often several times a day, along with washing hands, washing hands, washing hands!

If you add the fact that, for at least a month or two, everyone in the household actually has had to stay at home or be in the home, it's all day, every day! Where water use during the week had been determined by work and school patterns, now the kids - and often parents - are home all the time, so there is the potential for increased water use.

#### FREQUENT MEAL PREP

One area of concern beyond the use of antimicrobial products is the increase in preparing meals at home. I recall reading articles stating that before the pandemic, we ate out as much as 40% of the time. While all the food preparation may not have come into the house now, these activities are the kind that increase water use and add more solids to the septic tank.

In addition, increased use of wipes and how they are disposed of is a well-documented problem in municipal systems; but they are at least as big of a problem for our systems. While I have seen various companies highlight not to flush their wipes - with a warning even on some packages - a few weeks ago I was in a dollar store and there were packages of wipes carrying the message "suitable for flushing." Continuing education efforts with your clientele not to flush wipes remains an important activity.

Potential problems for your customers will show up in the septic tank first. This is actually a positive because if you are visiting your customers and evaluating conditions inside the tank, you can identify problems and work with the homeowners to change behavior before the system is compromised.

If a tank doesn't have three distinct layers - floating scum, clear zone and sludge - it is time to talk with your customer about the use of products or medicines that could upset the system. If there are numerous wipes clogging the inlet, effluent screen or outlet, that is the education moment to change where they put

those wipes. If there is rapid buildup of solids in the tank due to cooking procedures, you can get them on a more frequent cleaning/pumping schedule.

The bottom line for me? I expect you will see many households during these times showing increased water use and will find the need to educate

users about the finite capacity of their system. The message is clear: Conserve water wherever possible. You can expect to see increased solids in the tanks, building a need for additional maintenance. To forestall future problems, now is the time to work with your customers to get on a regular inspection schedule and ensure potential problems are identified before they become major problems.

*Conserve  
water  
wherever  
possible.*



# Helping Hands Across Alabama

The Mission of Helping Hands Across Alabama is to provide or make repairs to Onsite sewage systems giving individuals a better quality of life. This program is intended for families, individuals, the disabled, wounded warriors and others with a financial need or living below the poverty level.

If you would like to volunteer for an upcoming Helping Hands project, and are NOT an AOWA member, you will receive a complimentary membership for one year!

Those interested should contact Abby Burns-Ashley at the AOWA office. [aburns@asginfo.net](mailto:aburns@asginfo.net)  
334-396-3434

The AOWA's Helping Hands Program completed six projects in 2020.

Here's who we helped!

Angela Brown – Barbour County

Rhonda Ginn – Lee County

Nettie Glenn – Chambers County

Sammy Griffin – Lamar County

Bridget Jacobs – Etowah County

Arnell Shiftlett – Jackson County



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**Associate Membership (\$150):** Associate Membership shall include any person, firm, association, corporation, or other entity in the manufacturing, wholesale supply, distribution or sale of components used in the manufacturing, installation, repair or maintenance of onsite wastewater systems. Associate members will not be entitled to vote on business transactions of the association.

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