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## Operator of the Year Award

Tom Ryan, Water Treatment and Wastewater Pumping Supervisor, was named Operator of the Year in the Distribution category during the 77<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Illinois Potable Water Supply Operators Association held in Springfield, IL. The Association provides an educational forum for water operators and currently has over 1100 members. The conference is co-sponsored by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency.

The Operator of the Year award is the highest professional honor operators can receive in recognition of service and performance in the waterworks industry. The professional organization selects an Operator of the Year in groundwater, surface water and distribution categories each year, and designates up to two runners-up in each category.

Operators are nominated and evaluated by their peers. Once nominated, the operator completes a questionnaire for preliminary judging. Three finalists in each category are chosen. The selection committee visits each finalist during a "fly-around" of the state to interview them and inspect the day-to-day operation of their facilities. Selection committee members use a numeric system to rate nominees. The results are then tallied and winners are selected by computer. Winners are kept secret until they are announced during the annual conference banquet.

Tom has made significant improvements to the operations and maintenance of the Water Treatment & Wastewater Pumping Division during his 10 years as Supervisor including increased in-house preventive maintenance and troubleshooting capabilities, video taping training and documentation to aid in troubleshooting, installing redundant systems that have improved reliability of the water system, in addition to maintaining compliance with water quality regulations.

Tom's name will be added to a plaque that recognizes past Operators of the Year dating back to 1941 that is displayed in the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency headquarters in Springfield, IL.