

Minnesota Water Quality Association News

MWQA is a Trade Association representing the Water Quality Improvement Industry



July 2024

MWQA Provides Input on Plumbing Code Revisions

The Minnesota Water Quality Association continues to provide input to the Ad Hoc Rulemaking Committee as it reviews proposed changes to the Minnesota Plumbing Code. This committee meets monthly and reviews the current Code line by line, taking into account any Requests for Interpretation or Requests for Action that have been submitted. The new Code, which will be titled 2024 Minnesota Plumbing Code, will be released in late 2025.

In April of this year, the Department of Labor and Industry formally decided that licensed water conditioning people can install water conditioning in single family homes. There were a few reasons for the need for clarification. First, a definition of a water conditioning installation in old code books was not included when Minnesota went to the new national plumbing code in 2015. Second, language in the 2017 legislation on commercial water conditioning work gave some the incorrect impression that water conditioning installers could not install bypasses in residential homes. Exacerbating the problem was the turnover of people in the Department, many who have more experience with plumbing rather than water conditioning.

MWQA spoke at the Plumbing Board on April 17, explaining the history of WC licenses from 1969 through the transition of plumbing codes and the addition of commercial work to our scope. Ultimately, the Plumbing Board decided not to decide. This was appropriate because the Minnesota Plumbing Board is established to decide what may be installed and how things are installed. They do not have authority over who can do work and what work they can do. These “scope of work” issues are determined by state law and interpreted by DOLI management.

While MWQA feared the Plumbing Board would and could not make a decision, we wanted members to hear our case.

Plumbing Board members represent all occupations – inspectors, engineers, union, small business, big business, the public, and water conditioning. MWQA felt Board Members were closest to the action – basements in single family homes – and would have a good perspective on the industry. It was the Plumbing Board’s recommendation to DLI management that carried the day. DLI then issued a formal decision.

MWQA members in attendance to support the Association included former Plumbing Board member Mike McGowan of McGowan Water, Elias Naatz of Culligan Minnetonka, David Ghostley of Canature, Matt Wirth of Wirth Water and Pargreen. Jeff Hill made the presentation.

To assist the Board’s understanding, MWQA’s presentation described the limits of the water conditioning scope of work. Although known to all, these are worth mentioning.

Water conditioning installers:

- **do not cut into sanitary piping**
- **do not build traps in sanitary piping**
- **do not drill drain lines into a vent stack**
- **do not add new fixtures (outside faucet)**

In commercial work:

- **do not turn the water off to a building**
- **only connect equipment to isolation valves or a shut off valve already installed.**
- **do not install piping or valves larger than 2 inches**

The decision by DLI was sent to MWQA via email and can be [viewed on MWQA’s website](#). MWQA will work to solidify the clarification in future Codes; Plumbing Board Chair Richard Becker indicated that there may be an appropriate place in the Plumbing Code to add some installation description. MWQA is working on additional language clarification with the Ad Hoc Committee, which meets in August.

MWQA Sponsors Salt Symposium on August 6-7

MWQA is one of several sponsors of this year's Salt Symposium, an online event scheduled for August 6-7. This event celebrates the optimization of salt use to improve community sustainability and protect vital freshwater systems and infrastructure. The Salt Symposium brings together leaders from diverse economic sectors to learn about the impacts of chloride and reduction methods. Professionals from across the world will share their expertise on current research initiatives including water softening, wastewater, fertilizer, snow and ice management, and more. The event is hosted by Bolton and Menk, an engineering company that provides services including water resources engineering, water and wastewater treatment, surveying and land development.

Several topics of interest to water conditioning professionals are on the agenda this year, including:

- The Hard Task of Softening Water in Multifamily Housing
- Centralized Softening as a Solution to Chloride Pollution
- Reducing Residential Salt Use in New Construction
- City of Waukesha, Wisconsin Salt Optimization Program

There are also several seminars on road salt, including how to reduce salt usage, using alternative deicers, and using salt brine for parking lot maintenance.

[Registration and more information is available here.](#)

New Venue For 2024 MWQA October 2-3 Convention

MWQA is taking a break from Lakeville this year and venturing to the Willmar Conference Center in Willmar, Minnesota, for our annual convention.

Scheduled for October 2-3, the event will follow the usual schedule with seminars, vendor fair and meals on October 2. On October 3, we are making a slight change to accommodate speakers. We will start at 8:30 a.m. and finish between 1-2 p.m. October 3 will include a continental breakfast and light lunch.

Speakers and seminars are still being finalized, but once they are, registration forms will be emailed to all members and will also be available online. We are always looking for speakers and vendors, so if you are interested in either please let us know asap!

Both the Minnesota Department of Labor & Industry and Minnesota Department of Health are planning to participate, so bring your questions regarding water conditioning licensing, scope of work, and plan approval. Let us know what your interests are, and we will try to cover the topics suggested at our annual event.

The conference center has two hotels adjacent to the event center, and has hosted several large conventions for trade associations. Hope to see you in Willmar!



MWQA Cuts The Cord on Landline After 30+ Years

Effective immediately, MWQA is no longer utilizing a landline phone number. The past several months, the line has not been reliable. Several discussions with the phone service provider did not resolve the issue.

Please use the following new phone number to reach MWQA:

612-804-0885

Upcoming Industry Events

MWQA Board Meeting

Wednesday, July 24 at 9:30 a.m.

Virtual only. Contact Lori Jansen at info@mwqa.com for link.

Texas WQA Annual Convention

July 30 – August 2

www.twqa.org

Minnesota Plumbing Board Ad Hoc Rulemaking Committee

August 7, 2024, at 9 a.m.

In person or virtually

Contact Lori Jansen at info@mwqa.com for link to virtual meeting.

MWQA TOWN HALL MEETING

Thursday, August 15 time TBA. Virtual.

Hear from national WQA President Judd Larned and discuss current industry issues with the Board and other members. Link to the Town Hall Meeting will be sent to all members prior to the meeting.

WQA Mid-Year Conference

September 17 – 19, 2024

Rosemont, Illinois

www.wqa.org

WQA of Wisconsin Annual Convention

September 20 - 21, 2024 at Wisconsin Dells

www.wqaw.com

MWQA ANNUAL CONVENTION & TRADE SHOW

October 2-3, 2024

Willmar Conference Center in Willmar, Minnesota

Minnesota Plumbing Board (full board)

October 15, 2024, at 9:30 a.m. In person and via Webex.

Contact Lori Jansen at info@mwqa.com for info & link to virtual meeting. MWQA has a representative serving on this Board (Adam Johnson of Culligan in Minnetonka)

\$2.8M Available for SE Minnesota Private Well Water Treatment

The Minnesota Legislature recently approved \$2.8 million in funding for home water treatment systems for SE Minnesota residents whose private wells test with high levels of nitrates.

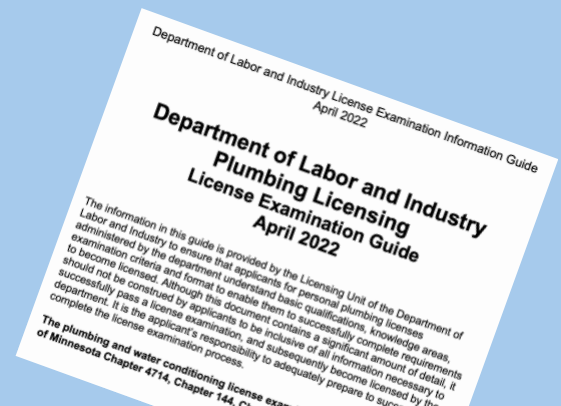
The \$2.8M is funneled through the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the process for implementation is still under discussion. Funding is for nitrate home water treatment, including reverse osmosis, for private drinking-water wells with nitrates in excess of the maximum contaminant level of ten milligrams per liter and located in Dodge, Fillmore, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Wabasha, or Winona counties. Priority will be given to households at or below 300 percent of the federal poverty guideline and households with infants or pregnant individuals.

The Minnesota Dept. of Health may also use this appropriation for education, outreach, and technical assistance to homeowners, as well as transfer money to the Commissioner of Health to establish and administer a mitigation program for contaminated wells located in Dodge, Fillmore, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Wabasha, or Winona counties. This is a onetime appropriation and is available until June 30, 2027.

In the meantime, MDH has a very limited amount of funds available now for eligible residents of these areas to receive free well testing and free bottled water. Approximately \$25,000 is available for free bottled water for pregnant people and infants whose drinking water exceeds the 10 mg/L nitrate limit — enough money for 50 households. In addition, there is funding to offer free well tests to 150 households. [Follow this link for more](#) information on the well testing and bottled water programs. Use Code 3JXFDHJ7W to apply via a survey through RedCap; it is free to apply.

Plumbing Exam Guide Available on DOLI Site

Are you planning to take a Water Conditioning or Plumbing license exam this year? The Minnesota Department of Labor & Industry has published a guide for those taking the exam. Although the publication focuses on plumbing, there is some helpful information for the water conditioning industry. Check it out at the link below:



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