

Utility Management
Office of Water Programs
California State University, Sacramento
(2.0 Continuing Education Units)

Objective

This course is designed to train managers to use sound business practices in managing a water utility.

Scope

This training course offers detailed information regarding all major areas of responsibility of a utility manager. The manual describes why planning, organization, and recordkeeping are critical to virtually all aspects of utility management. Practical, up-to-date staffing guidelines presented in this course reflect widely accepted management practices for interviewing, hiring, supervising, and disciplining employees. Legal requirements of federal legislation such as the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) are discussed, as is the importance of developing policies and procedures for dealing with harassment, grievances, and violence in the workplace. In addition, this training program highlights the essential elements of effective oral and written communications, including formal and informal public relations programs. A major segment of this course focuses on the financial management of a utility. Topics discussed in this segment include assessing the financial strength and stability of the utility, budgeting, and funding capital improvements.

Following completion of this manual, students should be able to:

1. Identify the functions of a manager.
2. Describe the benefits of short-term, long-term, and emergency planning.
3. Define the following terms:
 1. Authority
 2. Responsibility
 3. Delegation
 4. Accountability
 5. Unity of command
4. Read and construct an organizational chart identifying lines of authority and responsibility.
5. Write a job description for a specific position within the utility.
6. Write good interview questions.
7. Conduct employee evaluations.
8. Describe the steps necessary to provide equal and fair treatment to all employees.
9. Prepare a written or oral report on the utility's operations.

10. Communicate effectively within the organization, with media representatives, and with the community.
11. Describe the financial strength of their utility.
12. Calculate their utility's operating ratio, coverage ratio, and simple payback.
13. Prepare a contingency plan for emergencies.
14. Prepare a plan to strengthen the security of their utility's facilities.
15. Set up a safety program for their utility.
16. Collect, organize, file, retrieve, use, and dispose of utility records.

Lesson 1 of this course describes the elements of a utility manager's job and introduces basic concepts of organizational management. A major portion of the lesson focuses on one of a manager's most important responsibilities—staffing. While most operators will already have a general understanding of personnel policies and procedures based on their own work experiences, it is likely that relatively few will have considered staffing issues from the perspective of a manager. Key concepts that should be emphasized include a manager's responsibility to treat all employees and job applicants fairly and equitably, to base hiring and employment decisions only on job-related criteria, to fully document personnel actions, and to stay informed about and comply with the federal and state laws governing employment practices.

Lesson 2 describes the typical responsibilities of a utility manager in nine additional areas, from written and oral communications to public relations to emergency planning and homeland defense. Each area of responsibility is important and is described in a separate section, but students also need to develop an understanding of the many ways a manager's responsibilities overlap. As an example, assume XYZ Water Utility decides that one of its main goals for the future is to develop the best possible safety program. Accomplishing this goal will require the manager to develop a comprehensive project plan, calculate costs, budget the needed funds, write and implement safety policies and procedures, provide safety training, and hold supervisors and employees accountable for using safe work practices. In carrying out the program, the manager may need to delegate some tasks, give oral presentations, conduct meetings, and justify budgets. In other words, a manager's underlying abilities to plan, organize, delegate, and communicate effectively will directly affect the outcome of the project.

As you present the material in this manual, frequently ask students to examine an issue or project from the manager's perspective. What skills and abilities are important? How does a particular decision affect other areas of the utility's operations? What effect will an action or decision have on the budget or on employee morale? Encourage your students to consider the needs of the whole organization and to think about ways to balance competing demands, whether for funds or staff or equipment.

TIME ASSIGNMENT

Text Pages: The course uses the training manual *Utility Management* (58 pages). The average word count on a page from the training manual is 950 words. Some pages contain tables, graphs, or illustrations to enhance the presentation of information. It is assumed that readers spend equal time studying tables, graphs, and illustrations as they would spend reading the equivalent amount of text. Therefore, each page is assumed to contain the equivalent of 950 words. Accepted average adult reading speed is 200 – 250 words per minute. Therefore, each page is projected to require four minutes of student time for each reading.

Questions: The course contains 59 assessment questions integrated into the reading. Each question requires a written response consisting one or more sentences. Projected average review question time is two minutes per question.

Discussion questions: The course contains 30 discussion questions. Each discussion question requires a written response consisting one or more sentences. Projected average discussion question time is two minutes per question.

Review questions: The course contains 31 comprehensive review questions. Projected average response time is one minute per question.

Objective test questions: The course contains 55 objective test questions. Projected average response time is one minute per question.

Component	Minutes per Component Unit	Number of Component Units	Time to Complete Units
Text pages	4	58	232
Questions	2	59	118
Discussion questions	2	30	60
Review questions	1	31	62
Objective test questions	1	55	55
Total (minutes)			527
Total (hours)			9