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# Arkansas Water Personnel Moves: Arkansas Department of Health Reorganization of District/Engineering Section Staff

## Arkansas Environmental, Energy, and Water Law Blog

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The Arkansas Department of Health ("ADH") Engineering Section publication *Arkansas Drinking Water Update* ("Update") Summer 2016 Edition has an article noting that:

...the Field Surveillance Group (District Engineers and Specialists) in the Engineering Section recently underwent a change in organization.

ADH Engineering Section Chief Engineer, Lance Jones, P.E., authors the article.

The article states that the change is "an effort to better direct technical assistance efforts to water systems while maintaining our existing regulatory and review efforts".

The ADH Engineering Section's primary function is the regulation and oversight of public water systems throughout the State of Arkansas. The Engineering Section is also the state primacy agency in Arkansas for the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act ("SDWA"). It is responsible for the oversight of safe drinking water activities and for the development of implementation of the Capacity Development Program in Arkansas. The Engineering Section has over 80 engineers, scientists, secretaries, data management, and administrative personnel located in the ADA's Central Office in Little Rock.

The reorganization is described as a reduction of the number of Engineering Districts from nine to eight. The reason for the elimination of a district is the reduction of the number of Arkansas plan review submittals. A ninth district had been added in the 1990s because of an increase in plan review submittals in that era. However, despite some increased real estate development in Northwest and Central Arkansas, there was apparently a determination that the "level of activity" has not returned to "pre-recession levels". Also cited is the United States Environmental Protection Agency's reduction in frequency of new SDWA regulation implementation.

The district change is described as follows:

...the boundaries for Districts No. 2, No. 3, No. 4 and 8 were revised to absorb the counties previously covered by District 9 (Conway, Cleburne, Faulkner, Johnson, Pope and Van Buren). The revision of district boundaries occurred at a time of staff vacancies to minimize the impact to existing staff and water systems. The staff changes included Gerald Sonders moving to District 4 from the old District 9 Environmental Health Specialist position and District 1 moved under the supervision of Raymond Thompson.

The article also describes the expansion of the Optimization and Assistance Program efforts under the Direction of Craig Corder. Those activities are listed as:

- Comprehensive Performance Evaluations
- Performance Based Training
- Area-wide Optimization Program

These three activities are cited for their ability to focus staff resources on noncompliance issues with regards to the Surface Water Treatment Rules and the Disinfection –By-Product Rules. Slated for expansion are activities such as further review and evaluation of operational and sample data from water systems:

. . .to identify any areas that can benefit from additional training or technical assistance to ensure compliance and improve the overall quality of water being delivered to consumers.

The number of employees in the Engineering Section will remain the same despite the reorganization.