

WEF HIGHLIGHTS

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From the President of the Water Environment Federation: Recognizing Wastewater Treatment Operators as Guardians of Public Health

Not only water professionals believe the advent of basic wastewater collection and treatment in the 20th century resulted in direct benefits to public health in the United States and other developed countries. In 2007, thousands of readers of the prestigious *British Medical Journal* picked sanitation, or wastewater collection and treatment, as the most important medical advance since 1840.

That's right; sanitation was chosen by medical professionals as the most important medical advancement during the past 160 years instead of anesthetics, antibiotics, and countless other Nobel Prize-winning advances.

Taking this vital public health service for granted is easy, especially when all you have to do is turn on the tap to get clean, safe water or flush a toilet to safely dispose of your wastes. Yet 2.5 billion people - nearly 40% of the world's population - still lack access to clean, safe water and basic sanitation, resulting in thousands of children's deaths every day. And the recent outbreak of cholera in Haiti that caused more than 1000 deaths provides another reminder of the dangers of poor sanitation.

Wastewater collection and treatment systems can be one of a community's most valuable publicly owned assets, but often they are its most underappreciated assets, with out-of-sight, out-of-mind buried infrastructure. Personnel operating and maintaining these valuable and vital public assets should be recognized as custodians of public health.

Improving Water Quality Since 1928

Formed in 1928, the Water Environment Federation® (WEF®) is a not-for-profit technical and educational organization with 36,000 individual members and 75 affiliated Member Associations representing water quality professionals around the world. WEF and its Member Associations proudly work to achieve our mission of preserving and enhancing the global water environment®.

WEF Headquarters

With a staff of nearly 100, WEF is headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, just outside of Washington D.C. To contact WEF, call toll-free at 1.800.666.0206 or 1.703.684.2400; email csc@wef.org; or write to:

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