

Ops Challenge: competition and training

By Chad Clay, King County

LIKE MANY IN OUR PROFESSION, I didn't know I wanted to be in it until I was. Protecting public health and the environment is a vital career, but few job seekers even know our industry is an option. We can increase our visibility by using the dynamic activities of the Operations Challenge to show people what we do and how it's done. The first time I saw Operations Challenge at PNCWA2009 with the teams racing around like NASCAR pit crews, I realized they were performing fundamental tasks hyped up with speed and intensity for the competition.

Ops Challenge props provide a safe, easy and engaging way to explore the skills of our profession. One can see how a pump or mixer is retrieved without having to bend over a wet well, try a hand at the winch that raises the equipment, and use lockout/tagout for the maintenance and safety events. With a little creativity, the scripted scenarios can be edited for the general public to try at open houses and plant tours.

To reach more young professionals, we can invite them to watch Ops Challenge at PNCWA, WEFTEC, and at trainings at Clean Water Services or King County. At high school and college career fairs, we can offer our profession as a very satisfying career and use Ops Challenge to let them touch the equipment and talk to the team members. I plan to produce a video that shows someone in the field performing the same tasks that are done in Operations Challenge. HR personnel who frequent career fairs can help, too.

Operations Challenge is a natural fit for mentoring young professionals. Ops Challengers put in a lot of hard physical work, perfecting every move to shave off seconds and achieve maximum productivity in every event. They study numerous resources to prepare for the plethora of questions they could be asked on the



Poo Fighters competing at WEFTEC2012

process test. They work hard to hone their individual skills and sharpen new skills. There is no shortcut to success, but with practice and maximum effort to improve your knowledge, skills and abilities, you will succeed.

For those already in the profession, Operations Challenge can augment your training plan. You already have the equipment to build your own scenarios or skills assessments for each event. You can create your own scenarios by changing the script of any event, and practice with equipment

you may not touch every day that is part of your foundational knowledge. The more people use the equipment, the more proficient they become, and the less anxious they will be using the equipment in the future. For example, shift crews at my plant don't perform a lot of confined space evolutions, but just gather the equipment, script a simple confined space entry or rescue, and viola...TRAINING.

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