



NEWS RELEASE: Drinking Water Week (May 3-9, 2026)

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| Who | Nebraska Section - American Water Works Association, a professional association of more than 300 members working in the field of drinking water in the state of Nebraska, including more than 40 public water utilities. |
| What | Drinking Water Week: For more than 40 years, the American Water Works Association and its members have marked Drinking Water Week as a unique opportunity for both water professionals and the communities they serve to recognize the vital role that water plays in our daily lives. |
| When | May 3-9, 2026 |
| Where | Nationwide, with special recognition for a number of activities and occasions here in Nebraska |
| Why | <p>Drinking water is the indispensable public utility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The reliable supply of safe drinking water is one of the top three modern contributors to public health, as measured in years of life saved.• Public water utilities are the only dependable way to ensure urban fire protection, responsible for approximately 40% of a community's insurance score under the Public Protection Classification® for fire suppression.• Safe drinking water is the public utility that makes every other public service possible, from fire and police protection to hospitals and power supplies. |
| How is this being recognized? | <p>Recognition and community engagement events are being conducted statewide. Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Omaha's Metropolitan Utilities District is recognizing James Bartels, Director of Engineering Design, for his 30th anniversary at MUD. Like many careers in this field, his combines an interest in STEM with a strong sense of public service. <p><i>We can connect you with experts from utilities across the state who can speak to the huge demand for water-sector professionals in operations, engineering, and laboratory fields. Lots of stable, high-demand careers are open!</i></p> |



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- The Auburn Board of Public Works is showing off its new water plant at Longs Creek, designed to produce up to 1,000 gallons per minute of safe drinking water. This project was Auburn's expedited response to the challenges of the long drought.

Representatives from Auburn and other water utilities are available to explain how drought and flooding alike pose challenges for water utilities, and how responding to those challenges takes time and leadership that often go unnoticed by the public.

Did you know?

- One of the reasons **Lincoln** attracted early settlers was the presence of salty well water – the opposite of what usually led to major settlements! Early boosters of the town thought Lincoln could grow rich by selling salt for use in meatpacking and other industries. The salt industry fell flat, but Lincoln continued to grow, and today it is one of the largest American cities not located along a navigable waterway.
- Access to drinking water had a huge influence on the location of the **Oregon Trail**, especially as it passed through Nebraska. Cholera and typhoid fever, both carried mostly by contaminated water supplies, were the biggest killers on the trail.
- Groundwater found in **aquifers** supplies the largest number of public water systems in the state of Nebraska.

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