

Ann Farris, Contaminated Sites, SPAR, Customer Service Excellence

Ann Farris is an Environmental Engineer Associate in the Contaminated Sites program. In 2009, sulfolane, a solvent used in processing petroleum, was found in monitoring wells near private homes north of the Flint Hills refinery. From the start, Ann has provided technical oversight and led the coordination of multiple parties and agencies to address the contamination. Here are two of several testimonials to Ann's quality of work:

"Ann's determination and commitment to resolve the North Pole sulfolane contamination is relentless. Her work on the project is a testament to DEC's mission." --Lisa Minnear, OASIS

"From the company perspective, I have greatly appreciated the quality of our relationship with ADEC. Because of Ann, this is not an agency –versus-company dynamic. We really feel that we are working together... ..the best example of collaboration between a company and an agency."--Marisa Sharrah, Flint Hills Resources

Ann has handled this very touchy situation with great expertise resulting in thorough communication and progress to address public health issues.

Barbara Trost, Air Quality Division, Exceptional Performance

Barbara is a technical expert in monitoring for harmful air pollutants. By developing and maintaining partnerships with community environmental programs, Barbara has successfully extended the Division's air monitoring resources into rural areas that are difficult to monitor. Fairbanks has been of particular concern due to its complexity with multiple pollution sources, unusual weather conditions and limited understanding of arctic atmospheric conditions. Barbara has been a tireless and creative force in increasing the understanding of air issues in Fairbanks, partnering with atmospheric chemistry researchers to develop sound planning and communicating effectively with all stakeholders.

Brandi Reinhardt, Environmental Health, Co-Worker Recognition

Brandi provides field support for the Food Safety and Sanitation Program. Her outstanding knowledge, organizational skills and ability to effectively communicate information to field staff define her. Her enthusiastic vision and concern for the public's well-being is apparent. Brandi always chooses the right way even if it is not the easiest way. Her support during extremely busy times supporting the field staff to assure that contact and violation information is up-to-date has been exceptionally valuable.

Carol Russell, Spill Prevention and Response, Co-Worker Recognition

In the workplace, Carol is consistently motivational and patient with her co-workers. Always positive, she never points out mistakes but shows others where they can improve in a constructive way. Carol never complains, always getting the job done thoroughly, even if extra steps are required. Her attitude and effectiveness add positively to the entire work environment. She keeps the big picture in mind, not getting hung up on redundant details that result in inefficiencies. She should have a “Queen of Kindness” sign on her office door!

Cassidy Kearney, Spill Prevention and Response, Leadership

Cassidy keeps the best interests of her employees in mind, providing new and interesting projects and support for learning new technology. She recognizes good work and makes others feel valued. Her high standards and expectation of excellence are contagious. She takes work home and demonstrates her commitment to professionalism in a friendly way. Cassidy is logical, consistent, a great communicator and, as a result, a joy to work for.

Jason Wiard, Environmental Health, Exceptional Performance

Once again, Jason has been nominated for a Denali Award. Commissioner Hartig receives frequent letters of appreciation from business and restaurant owners regarding Jason’s communications. In 2010, when rodents infested Juneau’s soup kitchen, Jason’s response considered the threat to the well-being of the clientele, the need for an immediate closure and the fact that such a closure would leave many in the community without a source of nutrition. He worked with the management to help them understand the problem and to devise a sustainable strategy. Thanks to his positive, collaborative approach, the soup kitchen re-opened the following day. Here is an excerpt from one letter:

“In short, I want to thank you for sending along an employee that seems to care about what I’m doing right rather than what I’m doing wrong. He is helping me get it corrected and not just pointing out my flaws”. --Petersburg restaurant owner

Laura Nielsen, Water Division, Customer Service Excellence

DEC’s Wasilla office has nominated Laura Nielsen for the Customer Service Excellence Award for her selfless, professional manner with the public and her co-workers. Laura has a strong work ethic, knowing and balancing the support of 20 staff in eight different regulatory programs. Laura is the first contact for many members of the public. Her customer service is outstanding, demonstrating that she really cares about providing the best information possible. Here is a quote from a satisfied citizen:

“Dear Laura, I want to thank you for the wonderful and timely service that you provided me this AM. I had no idea that I could call and have the information sent to me within minutes of requesting it. You have made my day so much easier by providing this service. Thank you again, your help is greatly appreciated.” --Wasilla resident, July 2010

Melanie Hollon, Environmental Health, Customer Service Excellence

Melanie has taken her front counter responsibilities well beyond the “meet and greet” to become familiar with all the Soldtona DEC office functions. Whether Food Safety, Contaminated Sites or other programs, Melanie’s knowledge and skills can answer questions and direct the visitor to the right contact. She follows up with phone calls or research to meet the needs of the individual question or issue. Melanie consistently supports her co-workers by helping out with special projects or events. Her excellence is an example to all.

Nancy Sonafrank, Water Division, Leadership

Nancy provides vision and direction to 15 environmental professionals in the Water Quality Standards, Assessment and Monitoring program. Over the last five years she has maintained an even keel and a high level of professionalism during program ups and downs. Nancy leads by example and respects her staff’s knowledge and skills. She understands that her job is to provide general direction and then allow staff to grow professionally, letting them provide the detailed technical expertise. Her leadership strengths include technical knowledge, acute advocacy, humility and kindness. Nancy uses her knowledge of chemistry and microbiology together with her collaboration with local officials and NGO’s to meet the needs of the public and communicate within the agency.

Remote Maintenance Workers Team, Water Division, Crisis Responders Team:

Kerry Lindley, Kent Knapp, Kyle Downing, Steve Evavold, Van Madding

The Remote Maintenance Workers (RMWs) are the true heroes of rural sanitation in Alaska. They prevent system failures with their routine trips and then go out to assist local operators with emergencies in weather that can only be described as horrific. In temperatures of 20 below and colder, often with severe winds, it is not uncommon for them to work all day and into the night to keep a village water or sewer systems from freezing up. If freezing were to occur, it is sometimes not possible to thaw the system out until summer. Extreme damage to the facility could result as well. Emergency assistance by the RMWs during 2010 helped to protect the public health of approximately 65,000 village residents by minimizing service reduction; rapid deployment avoided infrastructure losses and environmental damage. They make 350-400 trips to communities annually, some 35 of these are emergencies. In 2010 success was measurable in a number of areas including:

- A 50% reduction in the number of villages on the list for violation of the Total Coliform Rule
- No catastrophic system failures in RMW-villages as a result of O&M deficiencies
- A 5% increase in the number of RMW-served villages with operators certified in the required water treatment level.

“The RMW program deserves the Governor’s recognition for the outstanding work that they do. RMWs work side-by-side with local residents in the most difficult arctic environments to prevent catastrophic failures of community water and wastewater systems. This is a unique program that serves as the first line of defense outside of the local communities to protect the water and wastewater systems that serve rural Alaska communities.” --Marcia Combes, Director, Alaska Operations Offices, EPA Region 10