



The Post-COVID-19 World of Work. What Will It Look Like?

By Kerry Stackpole, FASAE, CAE, PMI CEO/Executive Director



Kerry Stackpole

COVID-19 vaccines are coming. There's a good chance you know someone who has received their first and perhaps their second dose. The numbers of those vaccinated increase every day; nearly 150 million people have received at least one dose and more than 15% are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 as of March 29.

What will the continuing rise in vaccinations mean for the return to offices and something we all recognize as normal? Many firms used the year of COVID-19 to reimagine their workforces and productivity across a range of employee groups. Ford Motor Co. is offering permanent telework to about 16% of its white-collar workers. Many high-tech firms, including Microsoft, are offering new permanent work flexibility with work from home as standard, assuming manager and team alignment. Clearly, not everyone can work from home, but companies are taking a closer look across their operations to determine what flexibility is available for their teams.

According to recent research published in USA Today, 23.9% of workers said they would rarely or never want to work from home post-COVID; 27.3% said they'd prefer to work from home five days a week; and 48.9% said they'd like to work from home one to four days a week. The on-site versus remote debate is likely to continue as managers and teams work to identify the most effective communication and engagement patterns. A reluctance to engage in pre-pandemic activities like using public transportation and riding in crowded elevators, along with the demand for increased social distancing in the workplace, will likely cause more pressures to allow work from home.

The author and futurist **Alvin Toffler** in his 1984 book, "The Third Wave," wrote about the "electronic cottage" as a future state. The "cottage" would have access to the Internet and all of the world-class communication tools needed. No more commuting. He suggested that when we could all work from

home, our work-life balance would improve and our relationships with our family and neighbors would make our lives richer. The pandemic has brought Toffler's vision to life, and while some might say the work-at-home experience still needs some work, it surely has changed our understanding of the people, places and things we took for granted. For many companies, their teams have thrived without a commute and with reductions in the expenses of going to and from the workplace.

The "roomies" versus the "zoomies" crowd creates an entire set of new challenges for team leaders and managers. Lessons learned from educators who are delivering content simultaneously to students both on and off campus offer some valuable lessons. Professor **Suzanne Blum** of Notre Dame penned an insightful column, "Why We're Exhausted by Zoom," for Inside Higher Ed. Blum pointed out subtle differences between face-to-face and Zoom communication. To her thinking, Zoom works well for lectures or for groups that have formal meetings with guidelines for whom speaks and when. Move to highly interactive exchanges or an active group, and the traditional speaking rhythms and speed of conversation are disrupted by the technology, resulting in less satisfactory outcomes for learners and leaders.

So, what needs to be done to support ongoing innovation, staff motivation, and your company's culture moving forward? Are the productivity gains witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic sustainable? There are numerous conversations underway about the best ways to bring teams together post-pandemic. As we look ahead, navigating company expectations and those of our teams is likely to surface differences and new perspectives about what's workable on this new frontier. The trick will be to avoid squandering the progress and value you created in this new world of work.

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PMI Course Update To Include 2021 Codes, Latest Standards

By Ray Valek, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Perfect for new learners and for those needing a refresher, the updated, two-part Plumbing Manufacturers International (PMI) Codes and Standards Course includes changes to the 2021 International Plumbing Code (IPC) and Uniform Plumbing Code (UPC), as well as new information about various timelines, requirements, standards and more.

Individuals or teams wishing to take the on-demand course at their convenience will be able to register soon for either part or both parts at safep plumbing.org/codes. PMI members and non-members are welcome to take the course, with PMI members receiving discounted rates.

PMI Technical Director **Matt Sigler** updated the course content to meet the needs of today's plumbing manufacturing professional, with PMI Education Coordinator **Stephanie Lass** working with PMI's learning management system vendor to develop the course's presentation. "The presentation has a fresh look, as well as new 'knowledge checks' throughout each module to help participants retain what they've learned," Lass said. Those completing each part with a final exam grade of 80% or higher will receive a certificate of completion.

In addition to including changes to the 2021 IPC and UPC, the course brings participants up to speed on updates to timelines for the UPC Code Cycle, Na-

tional Standard Plumbing Code Cycle, and International Code Council Code Development Cycle. Course takers learn about the state of conformity assessment requirements in North America.

Recent revisions to the Reduction of Lead in Drinking Water Act, the Lead and Copper Rule, and NSF 61 are also covered.

Part 1 provides a primer on standards, regulations, codes and conformity assessment

The first part of the PMI Codes and Standards Course provides the basics of standards, regulations, codes and conformity assessment for plumbing manufacturers. After completing this part, you and your staff will be able to:

- Describe product standards and their role in the plumbing industry
- Understand the various regulations that impact the plumbing industry
- Identify the model codes used in the plumbing industry
- Define conformity assessment and identify third-party certification agencies and marks of conformity

Part 2 covers standards and topics in plumbing

Part 2 is designed for plumbing manufacturing professionals with technical experience who would like a deeper dive into standards and other important

topics. This course material includes a discussion on how a water supply system can become contaminated with Legionella; how the weighted average lead content is determined in NSF 372 (Drinking Water System Components – Lead Content) for plumbing products such as faucets; and accessibility requirements that impact plumbing product manufacturers. In addition, the course covers:

- Backflow and its causes, and the standards that pertain to backflow prevention
- Standards that regulate water temperature and the various valves used
- Minimum water quality standards and conservation requirements
- Accessible design and the fundamental provisions for design and installation
- Regulations affecting manufactured housing
- Legionella and water supply systems
- Background information on the major U.S. standard development organizations

The bundled price for the entire two-part course is \$199 for PMI members and \$299 for non-members. Parts 1 or 2 alone cost \$119 for PMI members and \$169 for non-members. Those previously taking the course can sign up for a refresher two-part course priced at \$98 for members and \$198 for non-members, with refreshers for either part priced at \$49 for members and \$99 for non-members. Contact Stephanie Lass, PMI education coordinator, at slass@safep plumbing.org to receive a promo code for the refresher courses before purchasing.

"We're excited to bring this updated course to professionals in the plumbing manufacturing industry," said Sigler. "Codes, standards, timelines and requirements have been changing rapidly; taking this course will make sure you're current with everything that's happening."



April 29 PMI Webinar to Explore Future of Plastic Packaging

By Ray Valek, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

A future in which plastics are recovered and repurposed instead of thrown away looks quite likely for plumbing manufacturers.

Bills regarding single-use plastics are under consideration in nearly 10 states, and plastic makers have pledged to reuse, recycle or recover 100% of plastic packaging in the United States by 2040, according to the American Chemistry Council (ACC) website.

To explore the vision for the environmentally responsible use of plastic packaging within a circular economy reuse, recycling and recovery, Plumbing Manufacturers International (PMI) will host a members-only webinar, “Policy Drivers to Achieve a Circular Economy for Plastics,” from 2 to 3 p.m., April 29. **Prapti Mahuri** and **Craig Cookson** of the ACC will present. Register at tinyurl.com/78wd76fs.

Reaching the 2040 goal will be very difficult, but it must be done, the ACC says. It provides information and resources to help both manufacturers and users of plastic packaging to optimize the collection of used plastics and expand markets for repurposing plastics.

Mahuri is a manager of recycling and recovery at the council, responsible for helping plastics resin manufacturers to achieve their circular economy goals.

She also leads the Chemical Recycling Alliance, an organization of the leading chemical recycling companies in North America.

Cookson is the director of sustainability and recycling in the ACC’s plastics division. He is responsible for leading the division’s strategic national initiatives to increase the recycling of plastics, advance opportunities for energy recovery, and promote awareness of plastics’ role in providing sustainable solutions to society’s greatest challenges.

Plastics do provide a number of environmental benefits while noting that too many plastic products are unnecessarily thrown away after use, the ACC says. Often lighter than alternative materials, plastics manufacturing can require less energy and generate less waste and carbon emissions.

Once collected and sorted, used plastic packaging typically has been mechanically processed/recycled: cleaned, heated, and formed back into resin pellets (the basic plastic raw material). This recycled



Prapti Mahuri and Craig Cookson of the American Chemistry Council

material is then reused to make new plastic products, parts, and packaging, the ACC’s website explains.

Beyond mechanical processing, innovative technologies today can convert used plastics into multiple products, such as industrial chemicals/products, transportation fuels, and even raw materials to create new plastics. For example, some technologies break down plastics into their molecular building blocks to be repurposed into various valuable materials, including new plastics.

These technologies can significantly expand the markets for used plastics both in the United States and globally, helping to keep plastics out of the environment and in productive use.

Earth Day to Draw Attention to Plastic Pollution

The April 29 PMI webinar will be held several days after Earth Day (April 22). Ending plastic pollution has been a major campaign of earthday.org. The campaign draws attention to the harmful effects of plastic on marine and human health, beaches and landscapes, waste streams and landfills — and empowers people to make a difference through involvement in activities such as the Great Global Cleanup. Through toolkits, calculators and other resources, earthday.org provides instruction on how to cut plastic use and create a healthier world.

**HAPPY
EARTH DAY**
•REDUCE•REUSE•RECYCLE•



PMI Engages With Public Officials on Breaking Issues

By Ray Valek, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Breaking developments on issues including tariffs, lead testing, water efficiency, infrastructure and more have kept Plumbing Manufacturers International (PMI) and coalition members busy and engaged with federal and state decision-makers over the past several weeks.

Tariffs

PMI signed on to a letter from the Americans for Free Trade coalition to United States Trade Representative **Katherine Tai** encouraging the removal of tariffs on goods imported from China. “Lifting the additional tariffs is a simple, straightforward way to provide an economic boost to American families, American workers, and American businesses and to help ensure a successful economic recovery,” Americans for Free Trade wrote. “It is also an important step to repairing relationships with U.S. trading partners and allies and restoring our standing on the world stage.” More than 160 trade associations signed on to the letter.

Lead and Copper Rule and California lead testing

PMI sent a letter of congratulations to the new administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) **Michael Regen**. On the same day of his March 10 confirmation by the U.S. Senate, the EPA announced that it will delay Trump-era changes to the Safe Drinking Water Act’s Lead and Copper Rule to provide for more public input, especially from communities at high risk of toxic lead exposure in their drinking water.

In California, PMI has been working with officials to determine deadlines for compliance with the revised NSF 61 lead testing standard, which reduces the amount of lead allowable to be released during product testing by five-fold – from 5µg to 1µg. PMI wishes to provide enough time for manufacturers to assure adequate supply and choices of certified faucets and other end-point devices

meeting the standard in the marketplace.

Water-efficiency

PMI also has reached out to new Department of Energy Secretary **Jennifer Granholm**, as the department has determined it will launch a federal review of several Trump administration rules and regulations surrounding water-flow levels of many household appliances, including the new showerhead definition. The Trump administration changed the definition to allow for 2.5 gallons per minute (gpm) to be released from each showerhead within a multiple showerhead rather than limiting the entire device to 2.5 gpm. In an interview with the Washington Post, PMI CEO/Executive Director **Kerry Stackpole** called the new definition, now under review, “a regulatory solution in search of a problem – a problem that doesn’t exist.”

Stackpole and PMI federal government affairs representative **Stephanie Salmon** were recently interviewed by Supply House Times editor **Natalie Forster** about plumbing manufacturing industry efforts to promote water efficiency (tinyurl.com/4rnn88zz). Salmon said consumer demand for water-efficient products continues to grow, and PMI is working hard to make sure new legislators know this. “Education is who we are at PMI, and that’ll continue to be the focus moving forward,” Salmon said. “There are almost 70 new lawmakers, including some in states like Georgia where we have a really strong presence. So we have reached out and will continue to reach out to educate these lawmakers about the great things our industry is doing.”

Stackpole also talked to Water Quality Products editor **Lauren Del Ciello** about a range of issues during a video interview (tinyurl.com/47cm2zy8). He talked about the importance of engag-



ing with public officials. “There’s this old saying in politics which is that, ‘If you’re not at the table, you’re likely on the menu.’ I think that for water professionals the trick is to be engaged... If you’re a water professional and you’re interested in these issues, you need to communicate that to your elected leaders. You need to partner with your industry associations and engage with your associations.”

Infrastructure

The new 2021 Report Card for America’s Infrastructure from the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) adds weight to appeals for Congress to authorize investments in drinking water and wastewater systems as part of a legislative package to modernize bridges, roads, public transit, energy, broadband and other kinds of infrastructure. The Biden administration is working with business leaders and organizations like PMI to develop the jobs-creating “Build Back Better” program and determine how to pay for it.

Online Transparency

PMI is supporting the Integrity, Notification, and Fairness in Online Retail Marketplaces (INFORM) Consumers Act, which was introduced in late March by a bipartisan group of U.S. senators. The bill is designed to help fight the online sale of stolen, counterfeit and dangerous consumer products by requiring extensive transparency of large-volume third-party online retailers.

Workplace Expert Shares Tips to Motivate Four Generations

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

In the first of this year's Plumbing Manufacturers International (PMI) Aspiring Leaders Webinar Series, presenter **Jeff Butler** discussed the importance of relationships, emotional connection and positive feedback to engage workers. He shared practical tools, such as reverse mentoring programs, that attendees could use to manage cross-generational challenges at their organizations.

Butler, an author and workplace strategist, led several PMI members through a series of questions, stereotypes, theories and practical tips during the March webinar titled "Effectively Navigating the Multigenerational Workplace." His insights were meant to help participants better understand the differences, motivations and communication styles of the four generations now working together: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z.

Strong relationships, emotional connection = more engaged employees

Robust relationships and emotional connection are key components when engaging and motivating workers – no matter their generation, according to Butler. "Building those relationships is the fabric of what makes people really want to stay at an organization, turning it from a job into something that they're passionate about," he said.

Butler cited Gallup research showing that if someone has more than five relation-

ships in the workplace, they're 90% more likely to be engaged. The goal for leaders then becomes helping individual workers build strong relationships across the various generations in their organizations.

One unique way to do that, he suggested, is to create a reverse mentoring program, which former General Electric CEO **Jack Welch** and former Intel Corporation CEO **Andrew Grove** popularized in the late 1990s. Instead of the typical older, more seasoned manager mentoring a younger employee, Welch would ask new employees who had recently graduated college to mentor him on a particular subject he wasn't expert in, such as technology. Reverse mentoring can help leaders and colleagues see things differently to help solve problems together, according to Butler.

Connecting emotionally is another important way for workers to break down barriers to reach a common goal. Butler noted emotional connection as the number one variable that determines if two different groups, like employees from different generations, will successfully get along. When co-workers attend the same conference or grab coffee together, they can find commonality outside of the workplace and make a personal connection. "Instead of seeing an employee, you see a person," Butler said. As a result, engagement deepens and walls come down.

He pointed out that for these efforts and programs to succeed, a company's culture needs to support them.

Old-fashioned feedback sandwiches don't work

All workers want feedback, however, research has shown that millennials look for it more than other generations. How that feedback is given can make or break an employee's outlook and level of engagement. Butler said that many managers have been taught to give the "feedback sandwich" – packing a negative response in between two pieces of positive input. This outdated approach is supposed to help soften the blow so employees can better handle constructive feedback, but it doesn't work well.

Instead, Butler suggested leaders have separate discussions. So, when something is done well, praise an employee as soon as possible. The same holds true for sharing feedback about a mistake. "Feedback consistency is very important, but we often neglect it because it's a difficult conversation and we don't necessarily want to hurt someone's feelings," he said.

Watch it on demand

For more information, and to learn more tips about building personal connections within teams, PMI members can watch the webinar on demand at safep plumbing.org/members/webinars-videos.



Astronauts, Earthlings Get Upgraded Bathroom Experience

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Humans rocketing into space have fascinated the masses for decades. Space flight has piqued curiosity and prompted many questions, such as what do astronauts eat? Where do they sleep? And one of the most popular questions, according to NASA: How do they go to the bathroom?

Space plumbing systems, particularly the specially designed toilets, play an important role in the health and welfare of astronauts and their missions. In April, we'll have an opportunity to celebrate humankind's accomplishments in space while recognizing Plumbing Manufacturers International (PMI) member Delta Faucet Co., which is conducting research on the International Space Station (ISS), and PMI member Duravit, which has worked on improving the bathroom experience for astronauts.

April 12 marks the 60th anniversary of Soviet cosmonaut **Yuri Gagarin's** first human space flight and the date the United Nations designated as the International Day of Human Space Flight. The UN resolution describes it as a day to celebrate each year the "important contribution of space science and technology in achieving sustainable development goals and increasing the well-being of states and peoples."

Delta Faucet tests commercial shower head on the ISS

Many companies have taken research into space to improve their products, using the unique conditions on the ISS U.S. National Laboratory – namely the microgravity environment. The space station was designed to be a permanent orbiting research facility to perform world-class science and research that only a microgravity atmosphere can provide, noted an article on the NASA website.

Delta Faucet is looking for ways to improve the showering experience for its customers on earth, according to



the ISS National Laboratory website. Delta is testing and refining a commercial shower head product by evaluating water droplet formation and flow in microgravity to potentially improve the water conservation feature of its shower-head technology.

Space toilets graduate to more efficient design

Space toilets have come a long way. While Gagarin's space flight didn't have a toilet – because trips were relatively short – plumbing eventually turned into a necessity as flights became longer and more involved.

One PMI member has worked to upgrade the modern bathroom experience for astronauts. When NASA needed a high-tech toilet designed for both female and male astronauts to use on missions, Duravit offered its solution to the 2020 Lunar Loo Challenge – and won third prize. Duravit AG, a German subsidiary of Duravit, earned \$5,000 for its Centrifugal Lunar Toilet. It was designed to draw waste from a user's body and then use a centrifuge to accelerate and deposit the waste into a tank via a screw conveyor.

In 2020, the ISS was fitted with a new toilet – NASA's Universal Waste

Management System (UWMS), which improved the user experience for mixed-gender crews, reported a Cnet article. It replaced the outdated 1990s system on the U.S. side of the ISS.

Not only do astronauts use the plumbing and toilets on the ISS, they help maintain and repair them, too. NASA astronauts **Victor Glover** and **Mike Hopkins** took a spacewalk on March 13 to successfully rearrange space station plumbing. This video captured the trek: tinyurl.com/56hy6spd.

For those interested in learning how astronauts do their business in space, NASA and others have produced many videos on the subject. In this recent video, NASA astronaut commander **Chris Cassidy**, who completed a mission as Expedition 63 commander of the ISS, walks through the process – including a NASA checklist: youtu.be/3VocRAR0YgE.

Copper Alloys Earn Landmark EPA Anti-Viral Claim

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Plumbing Manufacturers International's webinar on "Antimicrobial Copper Alloys" delivered a timely message in February as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced a landmark decision about the anti-viral effects of copper alloys. For the first time, the EPA approved the marketing of products made from certain copper alloys with the claim that they kill SARS-CoV-2 and other viruses.

This decision offers plumbing manufacturers the opportunity to market the use of these copper alloys in their faucets, shower grab bars, sink basins and other products, noted webinar leaders **Andrew Kireta** and **Adam Estelle** from the Copper Development Association (CDA). Sixty percent of the webinar attendees said they have had customers asking for more antimicrobial technologies in their products since the start of the pandemic.

The webinar leaders discussed extensive copper alloy research and testing protocols developed through the CDA. The EPA used this research and testing

as the basis for granting the new copper alloy anti-viral claims.

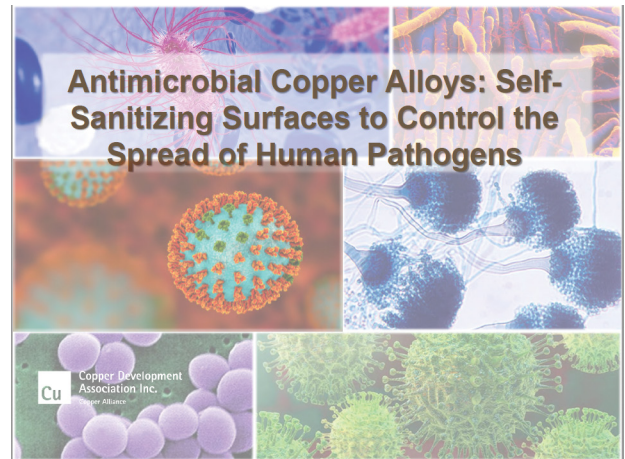
Kireta, CDA vice president of market development, noted that throughout the pandemic, the EPA had been working hard to identify applications, materials and products that could limit the amount of chemicals being used in buildings to fight the spread of COVID-19. "We just happened to offer the first – and only – material that can do that and we achieved this through quite a bit of work," he said.

Solid, uncoated copper surfaces work best

Laboratory and clinical evidence have proven that solid, uncoated copper-based metal surfaces are naturally antimicrobial with self-sanitizing properties. However, to make the claim that a product offers continuous residual effectiveness, copper content must be 96% or greater, Kireta said.

Kireta and Estelle, director, rod & bar for CDA, discussed the CDA's partnership with the EPA in developing appropriate testing protocols on copper alloys to prove they offer continuous reproducible anti-viral effects. Those efforts resulted in more than 500 different copper alloy compositions that are registered with the EPA to make public health claims against several bacteria, such as SARS-CoV-2, E. coli, and methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA).

They described the built environment as a "reservoir of pathogens" and noted that 80% of infectious diseases are spread by touch. Estelle referred to an experiment in which a tracer virus was applied to one doorknob and tabletop



in office buildings. Within two to four hours, the virus was detected on 40% to 60% of the workers, visitors and commonly touched items – like doorknobs.

While traditional sanitizing practices of handwashing and using disinfectants on surfaces can help reduce the spread of viruses, these practices work better when augmented with solid, uncoated copper surfaces, Estelle reported. "Copper surfaces are a supplement that provides continuous protection in between those episodic interventions," he added. Estelle shared a surprising discovery: when copper tarnishes, it becomes more effective at fighting certain pathogens.

The webinar leaders shared details about the extensive testing and requirements necessary for plumbing manufacturers and others that want to use copper in their products to make an EPA-registered anti-viral claim. The burden of proof weighs heavily on suppliers. Raw materials such as sheet, rod and tube must be purchased from an EPA-registered alloy supplier, Estelle said.

Watch it on demand

For more information, including what clinical trials revealed about cost savings from the use of copper products, PMI members can watch the webinar on demand at safeplumbing.org/members/webinars-videos.

Upcoming PMI Members-Only Events!

May 27, 2-3 p.m. CT: Webinar on water demand during the pandemic year of 2020. Water expert Peter Mayer will provide unprecedented insights into water use patterns uncovered during 2020. Mayer will also touch on California AB 1434, a bill that would lower the gallons per capita daily standard for indoor residential water use.

June 23, 11 a.m.-1:15 p.m. CT: PMI Virtual Legislative Forum. This annual event will focus on federal issues pertinent to PMI's advocacy and government affairs efforts such as infrastructure, tariffs, the Lead and Copper Rule, WaterSense, and online transparency of retailers.

Virtual EWTS Announces Program, Opens Registration

Plumbing Manufacturers International joins the Alliance for Water Efficiency, American Society of Plumbing Engineers and IAPMO, in cooperation with the World Plumbing Council, to encourage your registration for the seventh biennial Emerging Water Technology Symposium (EWTS).

The virtual event will take place May 11-12, comprised of a three-hour program beginning each day at 10 a.m. ET. This biennial event continues to provide critical insight into the future of water-related industries. Nowhere else is such focused attention provided for professionals on all facets of optimizing the safe and efficient use of water.

Day One Program

- The Alliance for Water Efficiency's cooling technologies study: assessing municipal cooling water demands, conservation potential, and alternative technologies, with **Mary Ann Dickinson**, Alliance for Water Efficiency
- Environmental monitoring for assessing risk from Legionella and waterborne pathogens in building water systems, with **Janet E. Stout**, University of Pittsburgh
- Moving towards predicting building water safety: plumbing design, use and disasters, with **Andrew J. Whelton**, Purdue University
- Panel discussion – designing more resilient plumbing systems, with **Christoph Lohr**, IAPMO; architect **Jonathan Leung**, and piping systems expert **Edwin Gonzales**

Day Two Program

- Identifying key research needs for premise plumbing, with **William Healy**, National Institute of Standards and Technology
- Modeling premise plumbing systems: the final frontier, with **Steve Buchberger**, University of Cincinnati
- Water from air: pipe dream or resilient complement to premise plumbing systems, with Water Harvesting, Inc.
- The internet of water: enabling competitions to drive behavioral change, with **Nina Kshetry**, Ensaras, Inc.
- Panel discussions – government relations industry discussion, TBD

To view the full program for this year's virtual event and register, visit ewts.org. Because the EWTS is being produced in the virtual environment this year, the co-conveners are offering the event at the much-reduced rate of \$69 to make the event available to a wider audience.

The co-conveners are looking forward to welcoming everyone in person in May 2022 for the next EWTS event that will take place in San Antonio.



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