

ANSI/AWWA **G420-24**
(Revision of ANSI/AWWA G420-17)

AWWA Management Standard



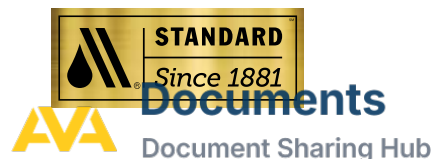
Communication and Customer Relations

Effective date: Feb. 1, 2025

First edition approved by Board of Directors June 14, 2009

This edition approved Oct. 14, 2024

Approved by American National Standards Institute Sept. 23, 2024



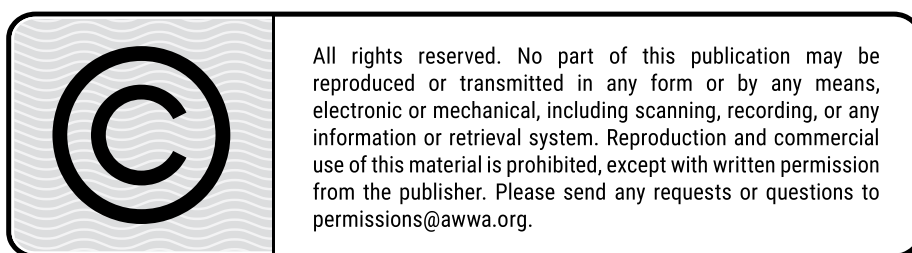
AWWA Management Standard

This document is an American Water Works Association (AWWA) management standard. It is not a specification. AWWA management standards describe consensus requirements for utility management practices. The use of AWWA management standards is entirely voluntary. This standard does not supersede or take precedence over or displace any applicable law, regulation, or code of any governmental authority. AWWA management standards are intended to represent a consensus of the water industry of requirements and practices that utilities should strive to achieve. When AWWA revises or withdraws this standard, an official notice of action will be placed in the Official Notice section of *Journal AWWA*. The action becomes effective on the first day of the month following the month of *Journal AWWA* publication of the official notice.

American National Standard

An American National Standard implies a consensus of those substantially concerned with its scope and provisions. An American National Standard is intended as a guide to aid the manufacturer, the consumer, and the general public. The existence of an American National Standard does not in any respect preclude anyone, whether that person has approved the standard or not, from manufacturing, marketing, purchasing, or using products, processes, or procedures not conforming to the standard. American National Standards are subject to periodic review, and users are cautioned to obtain the latest editions. Producers of goods made in conformity with an American National Standard are encouraged to state on their own responsibility in advertising and promotional materials or on tags or labels that the goods are produced in conformity with particular American National Standards.

CAUTION NOTICE: The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) approval date on the front cover of this standard indicates completion of the ANSI approval process. This American National Standard may be revised or withdrawn at any time. ANSI procedures require that action be taken to reaffirm, revise, or withdraw this standard no later than five years from the date of ANSI approval. Purchasers of American National Standards may receive current information on all standards by calling or writing the American National Standards Institute, 1180 Avenue of the Americas, 10th Floor, New York, NY 10036; (212) 642-4900, or e-mailing info@ansi.org.



ISBN-13, print: 978-1-64717-231-2

ISBN-13, electronic: 978-1-61300-754-9

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.12999/AWWA.G420.24>

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including scanning, recording, or any information or retrieval system. Reproduction and commercial use of this material is prohibited, except with written permission from the publisher.

Copyright © 2024 by American Water Works Association
Printed in USA

Committee Personnel

The AWWA Standards Committee on Communications and Customer Relations, which reviewed and approved this standard, had the following personnel at the time of approval:

Lori Irvine, *Chair*

Consultant Members

L.J. Irvine, Jacobs, Greenwood Village, Colo.

C. Koslosky, Ascent Group, Athens, Ga.

A. McNeill, CDM Smith, Atlanta, Ga.

P.J. Olson (*liaison, nonvoting*), Standards Engineer Liaison, AWWA, Denver, Colo.

L.M. Pillsbury (*nonvoting*), CDM Smith, Phoenix, Ariz.

V. Price, Lockwood, Andrews & Newnam, Inc. (LAN), Houston, Tex.

K.P. Snyder, Katz & Associates Inc., Freeport, Fla.

Management Interest Members

A. Watson, Watson Public Affairs, Tigard, Ore.

M.R. Joseph (*nonvoting*), Brampton, Ont.

User Members

D. Beckwith, Retired, Irvington, N.J.

S. Frye, Nashville Metro Water and Sewer, Nashville, Tenn.

J.R. Glover, San Gabriel Valley Water Company, El Monte, Calif.

C. Kulp, New Jersey American Water, Camden, N.J.

This page intentionally blank.

Contents

All AWWA standards follow the general format indicated subsequently. Some variations from this format may be found in a particular standard.

SEC.	PAGE	SEC.	PAGE
<i>Foreword</i>		4	Requirements
I	Introduction vii	4.1	Overall Utility Communication and Customer Relations Plan 3
I.A	Background vii	4.2	External Communication (Nonemergency and Noncrisis) 4
I.B	History viii	4.3	Internal Communication (Nonemergency and Noncrisis) 6
I.C	Acceptance viii	4.4	Emergency and Crisis Communication 7
II	Special Issues viii	4.5	Customer Service 9
II.A	Advisory Information on Application of Standards viii	4.6	Customer Accounts Management 11
III	Use of This Standard viii	4.7	Customer Strategy and Satisfaction ... 12
III.A	Options and Alternatives viii	4.8	Community Education and Involvement 13
III.B	Modification to Standard viii	4.9	Utilizing Social Media for Water and Wastewater Utilities 15
IV	Major Revisions viii	4.10	Internal Customer Service 15
V	Comments ix	5	Verification
<i>Standard</i>		5.1	Documentation Required 17
1	General	6	Delivery 18
1.1	Scope 1		
1.2	Purpose 1		
1.3	Application 1		
2	References 2		
3	Definitions 2		

This page intentionally blank.

Foreword

This foreword is for information only and is not a part of ANSI/AWWA G420.*

I. Introduction.

I.A. *Background.* The AWWA Utility Management Standards Program is designed to serve water, wastewater, and reuse utilities—hereafter, the water sector—and their customers, owners, service providers, and government regulators. The standards developed under the program are generally intended to improve a utility's overall operations and service. One aspect of the standards program is an effort to establish formal management and operations guidelines. These guidelines identify the appropriate practices, procedures, and behaviors, the implementation of which will provide effective and efficient utility operations and contribute to the protection of public health, public safety, and the environment.

AWWA's standards process has been used for more than 90 years to produce American National Standards Institute (ANSI)–approved standards for materials and processes that are used by the water sector. These standards are recognized worldwide and have been adopted by many utilities and organizations. Likewise, this performance standard is developed using the same ANSI-recognized formal process. Volunteer standards committees establish standard practices in a uniform and appropriate format.

Formal standards committees have been and continue to be formed to address the individual standard practices for the diverse areas of water sector operation. A formal standards committee was created in November 2006 to create this standard for communication and customer relations. This standard is the outcome of the Communications and Customer Relations Standards Committee.

The Utility Management G-Series Standards were developed to assist utilities with identifying and implementing applicable best management practices. To further enhance the use of the standards, the AWWA Utility Quality Management Committee developed both self-assessment and peer-review programs to assist utilities that choose to meet performance criteria contained within the standards. The committee developed a framework for the stringent expectations of all Utility Management Standards, as follows:

- Utility Management Standards are voluntary, and their intent is to provide guidance toward best management practices.

* American National Standards Institute, 1180 Avenue of the Americas, 10th Floor, New York, NY 10036.

- The requirements set forth in the standards describe best practices that are achievable but not necessarily the best of class.
- The language used in the standards should avoid requirements related to numeric values and words such as “shall” or “must” in areas that describe or could be considered in exceedance of existing local and/or federal regulations.

I.B. *History.* The first edition was approved by the AWWA Board of Directors on June 14, 2009. A subsequent revision to ANSI/AWWA G420 was prepared by the AWWA Standards Committee on Communications and Customer Relations and was approved on Jan. 14, 2017. This edition of ANSI/AWWA G420 was approved on Oct. 14, 2024.

I.C. *Acceptance.* There is no applicable information for this section.

II. Special Issues.

II.A. *Advisory Information on Application of Standards.* This standard includes only those requirements that are limited exclusively to establishing effective communication and public relations for operation and management of a drinking water or wastewater utility. Separate standards adopted by the Standards Program will cover in more detail utility programs such as water treatment plant operation and management, distribution systems operation and management, source water protection, utility management systems, security practices, emergency preparedness, financial management, and other business systems.

III. Use of This Standard. It is the responsibility of the user of an AWWA standard to determine that the products and provisions described in that standard are suitable for and compatible with the user’s intended application being considered.

III.A. *Options and Alternatives.* It is anticipated that options and alternatives to this standard may be identified during the pilot process.

III.B. *Modification to Standard.* There is no applicable information for this section.

IV. Major Revisions. Major revisions made to the standard in this edition include the following:

1. Added general description of AWWA Utility Management Standards to the background section of the Foreword (Sec. I.A.).
2. Removed outdated social media definitions including “blog” and “message boards” (Section 3).
3. Clarified recommended items to be included in a communication and customer relations plan (Sec. 4.1.2).

4. Added notation on the importance of open external communications (Sec. 4.2.1).
5. Added guidance on accessibility of external communication (Sec. 4.2.4).
6. Added guidance on including appropriate training for employees (Sec. 4.2.6).
7. Clarified requirements for internal communication plans (Sec. 4.3.5).
8. Added reference to America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 (AWIA) for regulatory guidance on emergency and crisis communication (Sec. 4.4.1).
9. Clarified requirements for media to include in crisis communication plans (Sec. 4.4.3).
10. Clarified recovery plan requirements for working with customers (Sec. 4.5.6).
11. Added guidance for directing customers facing service termination to possible resources (Sec. 4.6.9).
12. Clarified resources to be used in community education (Sec. 4.8.2).
13. Clarified goals to be included in community education plans (Sec. 4.8.4).
14. Clarified key elements of a social media plan (Sec. 4.9.3).

V. Comments. If you have any comments or questions about this standard, please call AWWA Engineering and Technical Services at (303) 794-7711; write to the department at 6666 West Quincy Avenue, Denver, CO 80235-3098; or email at standards@awwa.org.

This page intentionally blank.