

EDUCATION

Public and Professionals Benefit at Water Education Center

Meggan Reed – Center for Water Education

In 2001, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California formed an independent entity known as The Center for Water Education. Its mission is “to stimulate and promote an awareness and appreciation of water-related issues—past, present, and future—and to provide leadership for a better understanding of the history of water and its importance in our daily lives.” After five years of planning, the brand new Center for Water Education is now educating water professionals and is open to the public as a complete water educational facility, containing 23,000 square feet of interactive exhibits, meeting rooms and office space. The center now hosts visitors, school groups, and community outreach programs, and provides a venue for continuing education for municipal water professionals and water science research.

Located in Hemet, in interior Southern California near Diamond Valley Lake, the new facility is a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold-certified campus, with water and energy conservation measures built into the design. The solar installation is the largest of its kind in the western United States, and includes a hands-on exhibit where guests can view the kilowatt hours generated by the facility and learn more about this alternative energy source.

To best serve water professionals, the center offers “Contact Hour Friday” workshops for professional development, and training courses for certification and certification renewal for water utility operators on various topics, including distribution, treatment, backflow, and cross connection. Review courses and workshops will also be offered before the state certification exams. More information on these courses can be found on the center’s website.

The center’s exhibits celebrate water in many ways, including the reception area’s twenty-eight foot waterfall. “Wonders of Water” exhibits feature large freshwater aquariums, a sick fish exhibit, and a complete hydrological cycle. Spillway gates lead into the “Odyssey of Water” where visitors explore a dam façade, a



California aqueduct map, a desalination exhibit, a hydroelectricity house, an impellor, and a pumping station. The exhibits all reinforce the importance of water, and include a water play lab, a water well show, and a liquid timeline.

Although the main focus of the center is to serve the continuing education needs of water professionals and water utility operators, there are events and educational programs for everyone, including K-12 school groups, a high school-level “Career Explorers” program, a landscapers group, and the general public. Field trips of elementary school visitors can enjoy the water exhibits, and their teachers can utilize the new water curriculum created by the center, aligned to the California State Standards to help their students better understand this vital resource.

Most people never call their local water utility unless they experience a problem: their water tastes bad, their bill is high, or their water doesn’t turn on. Water delivery is truly a “silent service” and the center hopes to change that notion for the public.

Visit www.centerforwater.net.

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