

## Members' Resiliency During The COVID-19 Pandemic

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines resilience as “an ability to recover from or adjust to misfortune or change.” Saying the COVID-19 pandemic is a dramatic change from normal routines is an understatement. The pandemic is affecting everyone individually and collectively in different ways. There are news stories about the pandemic everywhere, news that makes one feel optimistic for the future or downright pessimistic. Some people have experienced losses directly, while others have been indirectly affected. As the world has journeyed through the pandemic, JPIA’s members have expressed their frustrations and shared their ultimate successes. Over the last six months, one attribute stands out from all the members -- resiliency.

**Remote work** was a challenging transition that many of the members had to face when the stay-at-home order was first issued. Members had to identify how their staff could work safely at home and meet essential needs. One member, like many others, had an employee who set up their workstation on their dining room table, since they did not have a dedicated home office. Working with the member, the JPIA coordinated a virtual er-



Byron-Bethany Irrigation District - Joe Resenders next to the District's hygiene/sanitize supplies.

gonomic evaluation and the member had the employee's work chair and other items from the office brought to their now “new” temporary home office.

But it wasn't just physical needs that had to be addressed, as everyone was sent home. Suddenly working

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by oneself presented emotional and mental challenges, too. Members got creative and offered social activities, happy hours, and contests via Zoom to maintain the connectedness among the employees.

**Employee training** standards were not eased by regulatory agencies during the pandemic. Therefore, members had to contend with how to train staff and still comply with new state and county health orders. Since JPIA members often prefer instructor-led courses for their group classes, this was an interesting challenge. Fortunately, members were able to leverage various online meetings and training tools with the assistance of the JPIA Training team. One of these tools, TargetSolutions, had a 400 percent increase in usage, as members used it to meet their needs. Also, while adjusting to the new normal and responding to their local district

needs, nine employees from multiple members were able to complete their JPIA Professional Development Programs (PDP) certificates. Successful completion of these PDP certificates was made possible by the members working with the JPIA's Training Department to identify online courses that each PDP participant could take to complete their specific program.

**Operation teams** from all over California shared their acts of resiliency that were implemented during the pandemic. Early on, many members split their crews into teams and between facilities, thereby reducing the potential risk of exposure. Other members teamed up crewmembers into "bonded pairs" that could work together but would stay socially distant from other pairs. Members had to also find additional methods to communicate with their customers during the onset of the pandemic.

Some created visual signs that they posted on their vehicles, reminding customers to maintain social distances. Members also implemented COVID-19 safety requirements for contractors coming on-site.

**Administration staff** was pushed to look at how business was being conducted to meet new and unexpected challenges. New challenges were presented in the need to respond to state executive orders and legislation related to COVID-19. This included federal emergency changes to the Family and Medical Leave Act. To aid members, the JPIA's Human Resources, General Counsel, and Employee Benefits Departments provided several Human Resources Hot Topic webinars related to the new employer mandates.

Other challenges came in the form of a rising need for electronic payments that had to be addressed by all members. This included JPIA,



Byron-Bethany Irrigation District - Tony Papini conducting maintenance at Pump Station #4.