

# FOUNTAINHEAD

1st Quarter 2021

## Winter Wildfire Season

### Rain, Wind and Fire: What La Niña Means for Texas' Winter Fire Season

This article was previously posted on the Texas Water Resources Institute website on February 8, 2021 and written by **KERRY HALLADAY**, Texas Water Resources Institute.



Texas' winter/spring wildfire season is about to begin. Fire experts predict it could be a particularly active season due in large part to the presence of La Niña this year. The weather pattern often brings drier, warmer weather, and strong winds: the perfect recipe for fire.

"Mid-February through mid-April is the peak of winter/spring fire season," said Brad Smith. Smith is the predictive services department head at Texas A&M Forest Service, a division of Texas A&M AgriLife.

"Coincidentally, that

lines up with when La Niña presents itself."

"La Niña" refers to a cyclical weather pattern characterized by drier, warmer conditions. Meteorologists at the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center, CPC, issued a La Niña advisory in November 2020, meaning the conditions were present at the time. The advisory was later extended in January 2021, with predictions that the condition will last until around April or May.

**Wildfire Season, page 8**



**TGWA Bylaws Update - Pg. 10**  
**TGWA CE Class Updated Schedule - Pg. 17**



**Stories from the Storm - Pg. 12**

## Annual Convention Moves to August

By **ADELINE FOX, TGWA**



Due to potential uncertainty still surrounding the event in May, the TGWA Board of Directors met on March 9 and voted to move the TGWA Annual Convention to August 1-4, 2021 at the Embassy Suites Hotel & Spa in San Marcos, Texas. Because many events are being pushed to the fall, set up will be on Sunday and the convention will be on Monday-Wednesday. You can expect the same schedule that TGWA normally offers including a trade show, continuing education classes, scholarship foundation auction, and the awards luncheon. (See the schedule framework on page 5).

The board and staff are hopeful that this last postponement will allow all our exhibitors and regular attendees to participate and ensure a better and safer event that can include our signature networking events and awards luncheon.

**See Convention, pages 4-5**



# From the top of the rig

*Perspectives of Division Presidents*



**Terry Lowe**  
Contractors & Drillers  
Lowe Water Wells, Inc.



**Andrew Bettle**  
Manufacturers & Suppliers  
Pentair



**Rusty Tarver**  
Ground Water Science  
Tarver Geologic Services

## Planning Ahead & Moving Forward

Greetings everyone. Hope all is well with each of you. Hope each of you survived the “Big Freeze” with no or at least minimal damage to any of your property. It seems we have been hit with one trial after another for the past year and a half. Hopefully, better days are ahead of us and, once again I have no doubt that we will come out strong on the other side of these setbacks. I would like to dive in and give some updates on the 2021 convention. We have been working for awhile trying to come up with the best plan for this year. The date we originally set in May was determined to be too soon to have a normal convention. One thing we didn’t want to have was a scaled back version of our convention and due to continuing restrictions, the May date had to be changed. There was even discussion as to whether or not to completely cancel the convention for 2021 and come back strong in January 2022 which we really didn’t want to do. With all that said I am pleased to announce that the 2021 convention will be held August 1-4. We realize there is no way we can set a time that is good for everyone, but we had to move forward with a decision and plan accordingly. I hope you

**Please see Lowe, page 7**

## Respect and Patience

Ladies and gentlemen, start your engines. We may not slow down until December! What an eventful first quarter without the conference and more changes, changes, changes. We have weathered the storm and froze our tails off. Now comes the continued calls and when can you get out here and fix my water. I have spoken to all manufacturers and getting product to our distributors is the utmost priority. On our side having the parts is only the first issue. Shipping continues to be an obstacle not planned at any level. I believe like last year everyone is doing their best, and we can only take it one job at a time to clean up the mess that mother nature decided to hand out. Even the old timers did not predict this because if they did we would have all been prepared! I will keep it short. Let’s all get along and continue to treat each other with respect and dignity. If all you have to do is pass the complaining along to someone else, let it stop with you. Have a great quarter and be mindful of how you want to be treated.

Sincerely,

## Revision of Bylaws

A bunch of things are happening that are going to be somewhat different for the Ground Water Science Division and the TGWA at the 2021 Convention. For GWS Division members it is especially important to attend the next GWS Divisional membership meeting at the TGWA Annual Convention on August 1 – 4, 2021. Our membership meeting will involve discussing new organizational items concerning the GWS Division. There will be a discussion regarding the new TGWA bylaws that will be voted on for adoption by the TGWA membership at the convention. A discussion regarding the future structure of the GWS Division will also likely be necessary. Input by all the GWS members is key to the functionality of the division moving forward. So, come to the meeting with your ideas and thoughts.

By the way, you do not have to be an ‘official’ current GWS division member to attend this meeting. So, I encourage anyone with a shared interest in groundwater science to attend the GWS membership meeting.

The proposed TGWA bylaws allow for an unprecedented degree of exposure, cooperation,

**Please see Tarver, page 7**



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## Getting Through the Storm

No one could have imagined the damage that winter storms Uri and Viola would bring to Texas. Parts of Texas received record-breaking snowfall and experienced bitter cold temperatures like never before. Pipes began bursting and homes, apartments, and businesses began flooding.

Many Texans went without water and electricity for days and some were without both for weeks. The TGWA office floor flooded after a pipe burst in a neighboring office, but the damage was moderate compared to damages seen across the city and state.

In the field, contractors and drillers began repairs on pipes, pumps and other damaged water well equipment. TGWA wants to thank all of the hard-working men and women who worked tirelessly throughout the storm to restore water to families across Texas.

Even though these storms brought a lot of havoc to Texans, people came together in incredible ways. Those who did have electricity and/or water were sharing their homes to help their friends and neighbors.

Last year and the beginning of this year have been tough for all of us. We are looking forward to seeing you in person at our annual convention on August 1-4. Read more details about the convention on page four.



Photo provided by Roger Russell.

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John Julian, Vice President  
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William Gamblin, Immediate Past President

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August 1-4, 2021

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### REGISTRATION INFO

Registration for attendees, exhibitors, and sponsors can all be found at

[www.tgwa.org/annual-convention](http://www.tgwa.org/annual-convention)

### VENUE & HOTEL ROOMS

The 2021 TGWA Annual Convention will be at Embassy Suites Hotel & Spa in San Marcos at 1001 E McCarty Ln, San Marcos, TX 78666. Hotel rooms can be booked by calling (512) 392-6450 or [reserve it online](#).

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## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS | TENTATIVE

### MONDAY, AUGUST 2, 2021

10-11am	TGWA Membership Meeting (Vote on proposed bylaws)
11-Noon	CE Class (Rules & Regs)
1 - 3pm	CE Classes
3 - 6pm	Meet & Greet with Exhibitors
6pm	Scholarship Auction

### TUESDAY, AUGUST 3, 2021

8-9am	Concurrent Division Meetings (Election of board members)
9 - 11am	Exhibits Open
11am-Noon	CE Classes
12:15- 1:30pm	Awards Luncheon
1:30 - 3:30pm	Exhibits Open
3:30 - 5:30pm	CE Classes
5:30pm	TGWA Board of Directors Meeting (Election of officers)
6:30pm	Bowling Competition

### WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 4, 2021

8am - Noon	CE Classes
9:30 - 11am	TGWA Scholarship Foundation Meeting

## EXHIBIT SCHEDULE | TENTATIVE

### SUNDAY, AUGUST 1, 2021

2 - 5pm	Exhibit Setup
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### MONDAY, AUGUST 2, 2021

8am - 2pm	Exhibit Setup
3 - 6pm	Exhibits Open Meet & Greet with Exhibitors

### \*TUESDAY, AUGUST 3, 2021

8:30am - 11am	Exhibits Open
1:30 - 3:30pm	Exhibits Open
After 4pm	Tear Down

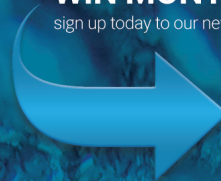
\* Entrance to the exhibits will be FREE on Tuesday, August 3, 2021 to encourage attendance.

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**Lowe, continued from page 2**

will make every effort to attend so the convention will be a success. We realize this is in the middle of the busy time of summer, but we were limited to the dates available. This year will be a little different as setup will be on Sunday August 1st and the convention will run Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Hopefully we can get back on schedule in January 2022. As for CE classes, we are having some in person classes again, thankfully. I think we are all ready for this to be over. The staff as always are doing an amazing job of doing whatever we have to do to keep moving forward, including managing our finances since we have taken such a hit since the pandemic started. Let me just say this - "We Will Prevail." I thank you for being patient with me since my term should have been up in January, but I have enjoyed every minute of this opportunity that you have given me. It is something I will never forget. I am looking so forward to seeing each of you face to face. Be safe out there. Always be kind if you can't be anything else. God Bless each of you.

Sincerely,



**Tarver, continued from page 2**

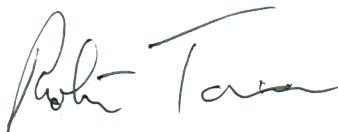
and the exchange of ideas among all three TGWA divisions by forming an executive committee with representatives from each board division. The degree to which divisions will interact shall improve greatly. I am eagerly looking forward to seeing this process form and grow into the future.

For the GWS Division, we have a rare opportunity before us to greatly increase the GWS role and participation in the overall activities within the TGWA. Particularly through the inclusion of more GWS members participating in important work on committees and subcommittees at both the Association level and the GWS divisional level.

The TGWA is one of the largest and most active state affiliate organizations in the nation. We are truly a leading state affiliate of the National Ground Water Association. The TGWA is often utilized by state level policy makers as a technical and business resource regarding groundwater policy, regulation, and service.

Involvement with the GWS Division and TGWA is a great way to network with other groundwater professionals, expand your participation in the industry, and stay informed regarding groundwater issues at the local, state, and national levels.

Sincerely,



## Legislative Update

By SARAH KIRKLE, TGWA

The 87th Legislative Session is about halfway over and will end on May 31, 2021. The Capitol halls are quieter than normal, with many people conducting virtual meetings and watching hearings from home. Masks are no longer required at the Capitol, but COVID testing is still required to enter the Senate chamber or committee meetings. Friday, March 12 was the bill filing deadline for statewide bills.

About 7,200 bills were filed this session, compared to about 7,800 last session. TGWA staff are tracking about 50 bills that could impact groundwater policy or other licensing/regulatory matters. The session is not as heavily focused on groundwater issues as in past sessions, likely due to attention spent on COVID and response to the electric market after Winter Storm Uri. If anyone has questions about bills TGWA is tracking or other policy questions, please feel free to reach out to Sarah Kirkle.

**7,200**

bills filed in 2021

**7,800**

bills filed in 2019

### Winter Fire Season in Texas

Wind and brown grass characterize the winter/spring wildfire season in Texas.

"I sometimes call it the dormant season," Smith said. "We have the cold winter weather that freezes and kills our grasses or sends them into dormancy."

Winter winds dry already dead or dormant grasses even more, turning them into excellent fuel for wildfires. They also help spread fires once they start.

La Niña takes the conditions that fuel the winter/spring wildfire season and makes them worse. Where Texas winters are normally dry, La Niña brings even less precipitation and warmer temperatures.

Historically, La Niña years have seen more, bigger fires that burn more acres. For example, over 5.7 million acres have burned in Texas since 2005 during the winter/spring seasons in La Niña years. This compares to 280,511 acres burned during non-La Niña years. Texas A&M Forest Service fire experts attribute this to the extended drying and the strength of the weather during La Niña years.

### Southern Plains Wildfire Outbreaks

According to Smith, La Niña conditions increase the risk for "high impact fire weather events." Key among these are Southern Plains Wildfire Outbreaks (SPWOs). Smith described these as situations with strong winds and "a lot of great ingredients for large fires that are very difficult to control."

He cited records showing that SPWOs account for only 3% of the reported winter/spring wildfires, but 49% of the acres burned.

"These SPWOs over the past 15

years have been the biggest threat to property and public safety," said Smith. "Because of our experience over the past years with La Niña winter fire seasons, we expect large fires. I think there's a good chance we will see one, if not more, SPWOs this season as well."

### Soil Moisture and the end of Winter Fire Season

"Our winter/spring fire season will end when the grass turns green," said Smith. "When we get warm enough temperatures, and enough precipitation and soil moisture, the grasses will green."

That usually happens in May in the high plains of Texas, an area that is particularly susceptible to winter/spring fires, under neutral conditions. But La Niña conditions are not neutral. The combination of less precipitation and higher temperatures means soil moisture levels are typically lower for longer during La Niña years. This is the case currently.

According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, soil moisture is currently lower than average for the state. That condition is expected to persist through the end of April at least. Similarly, the CPC projects Texas to have a strong to moderate likelihood of seeing above-normal temperatures and a moderate likelihood of seeing below normal precipitation rates in the next three months under La Niña.

"We still have a lot of time to dry out and incur some of these large wildfires."

**KERRY HALLADAY** is the communications manager for the Texas Water Resources Institute. She provides leadership for the institute's communications, including the biannual txH2O magazine, Conservation Matters newsletter, brochures, social media, media relations and special projects. She can be reached at [kerry.halladay@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:kerry.halladay@ag.tamu.edu)



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# TGWA Update on Bylaws By SARAH KIRKLE, TGWA

Last year, TGWA staff reported to the TGWA Boards of Directors that the lack of a proper overarching governing board bylaws presented significant risk to the Association. In response, the Division presidents created a Bylaws Committee to propose new bylaws and a new TGWA Board structure that would ensure compliance with the Association’s Articles of Incorporation and insurance policies. The TGWA Division Boards adopted the Bylaws Committee’s recommendations at their March 9th meeting.

**Highlights of the Proposed Bylaws, Including the TGWA Board.** The proposed bylaws combine concepts from current TGWA operations, the TGWA division bylaws, NGWA bylaws,

and other sample association bylaws, and will simplify the governance of TGWA and give the board more flexibility in how it operates. The proposed bylaws provide for a large board, consistent with our current board structure, with a strong executive committee, providing broad opportunity for involvement of all divisions as well as efficiency in decision making for the Association. Divisions will still exist and will elect a chair and vice-chair to manage division affairs, meeting as needed to discuss division-specific topics.

**Next Steps.** Members of the Association must vote to approve the proposed bylaws at the Annual Convention for the bylaws to go into effect. Once

adopted, the divisions will elect board members, and then the board will meet to elect officers.

- TGWA Bylaws Committee Members**
- Robert Hill, Chair
  - Pete Brien
  - Don Childers
  - Ken Grant
  - Judy Burkett
  - Jim Hopkins
  - Terry Lowe
  - Don McElroy
  - William McPike
  - Mike Melancon
  - Mike Miller
  - Van Schmuck
  - Rusty Tarver
  - Kelley Vickers

The vote on the proposed bylaws will take place on **Monday, August 2 at 10-11am during the Annual Convention.**

## Proposed TGWA Board Structure, As Approved By the TGWA Board in March 2021

### Board of Directors

**\*30**  
Contractors & Drillers

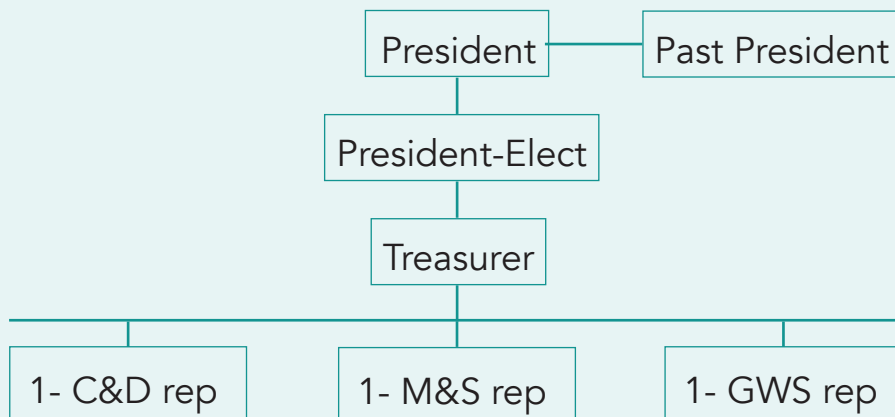
\*(22 + 8 chapter directors)

**13**  
Manufacturers & Suppliers

**10**  
Ground Water Science

Each division will elect a chair and vice-chair. Division members can hold key roles leading TGWA. The TGWA Board must appoint chairs of a membership, convention, and continuing education committee, and may appoint other committees as needed. Committees must have representation from each division.

### Executive Committee



### TGWA Women’s Division

This Division is an integral component of TGWA and works to support the Association and groundwater industry.



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# Stories from the Storm

By **ROGER RUSSELL, PETE BRIEN, & TERRY LOWE**  
*Texas Ground Water Association Board Members*

“Our work started well ahead of the cold weather first preparing our equipment for the cold weather. This included checking engine antifreeze, draining mud and water pumps, making sure all valves were open, draining condensation from air systems then adding alcohol and working it through each air system. Other preparations included filling our tanks with fuel and adding fuel conditioner to approximately 2000 gallons of fuel total.

Next we checked the readiness of our generators, pump trucks and support vehicles. Also during this time, an inventory check was completed and orders were required to assure we would have pump and motor replacements for our customers. This wasn't our normal cold front. We usually get three days of winter, which is an East Texas norm.

As we could, we contacted people that we knew could use some help in preparation for the freeze. Some folks just needed some advice with a phone call or even a text message while others we let others know what we were doing and why. Lastly, I made contact with our pump suppliers to get some information of when they might reopen.

As the storm started setting in, the typical first calls were from our municipal and rural water system operators. Their first problems were loss of electricity or unbalanced electricity. Sometimes the water operator just needed us to explain their situation and give them some options, like ‘you're going to have to run that generator’ and ‘no you're not going to get any sleep.’

‘Turn it off until everything is thawed out’ was the advice we gave to customers that had lost power and things were freezing. ‘Put me on the list’ was a common quote we received from our customers.

As far as our daily operation during this time, most of the employees stayed at home until the roads were good, but the more experienced ones supplied customer support by connecting generators and troubleshooting electrical equipment.

What have we learned from this? Preparing ahead is good, this has been our policy always. You can't change the weather, but people will need your help so buckle up and give them some help. Take care of your employees. Our employees lost some time during the storm but they were able to make it up with plenty of overtime. Some work is simply done for free while other work is paid very good. The people that you help remember the help - not what it did or did not cost.

If you were able to help your neighbors (and that means the people God puts in front of you) then you did well. I hope you did. We're still not finished with pump work yet. We are expecting to get all completed about mid-April.”

~ **Roger Russell, TGWA Board Member and Owner of Russell Drilling in Nacogdoches**



Photo provided by Roger Russell

“The cold front was on the way. We were taking calls, insulating plumbing, and giving free advice on how to keep our customers' pump systems from freezing during the approaching weather. As it got colder and colder, we realized that this was not just another ‘cold spell.’ Calls started coming in, but we were hindered by both the freezing weather, including lots of ice, and rolling black-outs (which caused pumps to come back on after the time off had allowed the plumbing to freeze). We responded to well over a hundred service calls and began to run short on inventory because of all the damage. Our suppliers were a big help and we managed.

Through it all, our customers were most appreciative but one note that we received with a payment stood out after the worst of it was over. We had set up an insulated pump house shortly before the weather hit and the note simply said: ‘Thanks for getting the pump house set up. Even with the power outages, a small heater and the insulation kept everything from freezing. No damage done!’”

~ **Pete Brien, TGWA Board Member and Owner of Brien Water Wells in Hearne**

**“If I never see another piece of shattered PVC pipe for the rest of my life, it will be fine with me.”**

~ **Terry Lowe, TGWA C&D President and Owner of Lowe Water Wells in Porter**

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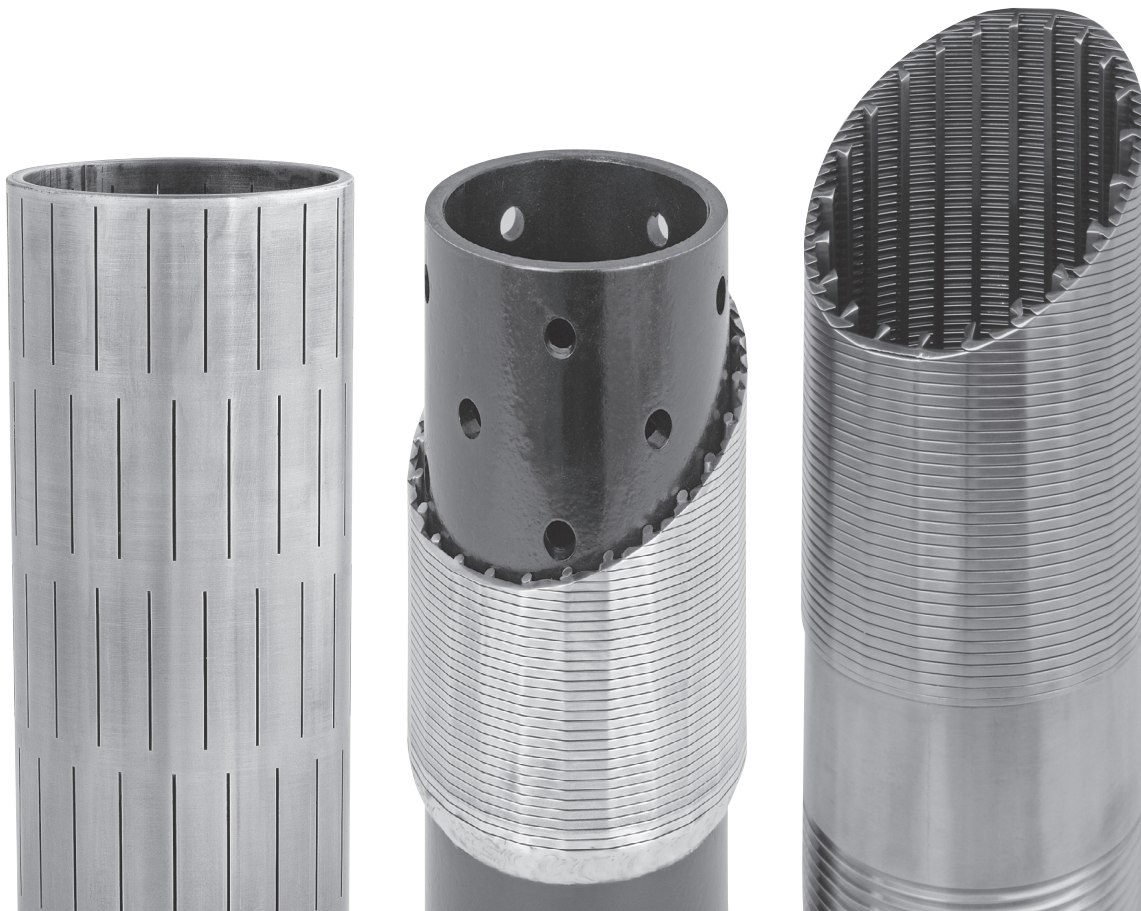
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# In Memory of Susie Givens 1954 - 2021

By LACEE NIVENS, *Rex McFadden Co., Inc.*

Susie was an absolute delight to talk to and be around. I loved talking to her on the phone! Either she would call me or I would call her in regards to drilling equipment on a weekly basis... but the calls were not JUST about equipment. The phone call usually was about 45 minutes at the least... we usually got on to another subject talking about our family and other random things! I talked to her Friday, the day before she went home to the Lord. She was so excited to go to Nashville, TN for the NGWA! She just loved being around people, and she mentioned that it was always so neat to put a face with a name at events.

Susie taught me and so many others many valuable things throughout the years. She was

always so eager to help people and one of the main things that she said to me a long time ago is "This industry is so big, but it is really a small family."

I never ever forgot that and she was so spot on. The longer you are in the drilling industry the more you understand that we all have to help each other. She was loved by so many and I know that she will be missed by all!



Even though Susie wasn't based in Texas, she was well-known and loved by many across the state and nation. On behalf of TGWA, we'd like to offer our condolences to the Givens family.

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# CE Class Update

By ADELINE FOX, TGWA

TGWA has hosted two in-person continuing education (CE) classes and two virtual CE classes since January 2021. The in-person classes took place in Tyler with 30 attendees and Fort Worth with 34 attendees.

Registration forms and more details for all classes are available at [www.tgwa.org/ceclasses](http://www.tgwa.org/ceclasses).

CE Class Schedule 2021 - Draft			
Date	Location	Time	Venue & Address
April 9	Lubbock	8AM - Noon	GICON - American Wind Power Center - 1701 Canyon Lake Dr, Lubbock, TX 79403
April 17	Houston	8AM - Noon	Pumps of Houston - 10239 Cossey Rd, Houston, TX 77070
May 1	San Antonio	8AM - Noon	Preferred Pump Warehouse - 13660 Old Farm to Market 471 W, San Antonio, TX 78253
May 7	Virtual	8AM - Noon	Zoom
May 21	Odessa	8AM - Noon	GICON Warehouse - 1101 S. JBS Pkwy, Odessa, TX 79761
May 22	San Angelo	8AM - Noon	Preferred Pump Warehouse - 1648 W FM 2105 San Angelo, TX 76901
June 4	San Marcos	1PM - 5PM	Austin Pump - Embassy Suites - 1001 E McCarty Ln, San Marcos, TX 78666
August 1-4	San Marcos		TGWA Annual Convention - Embassy Suites - 1001 E McCarty Ln, San Marcos, TX 78666

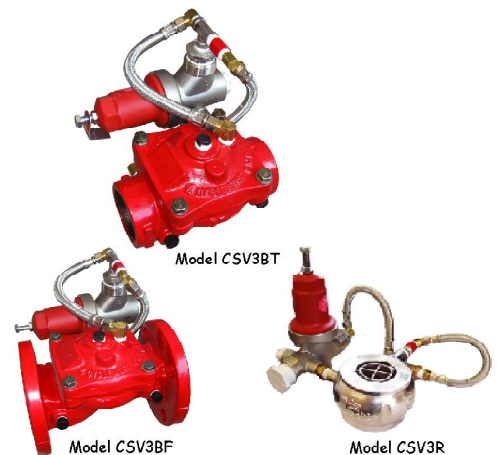
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3-50 GPM



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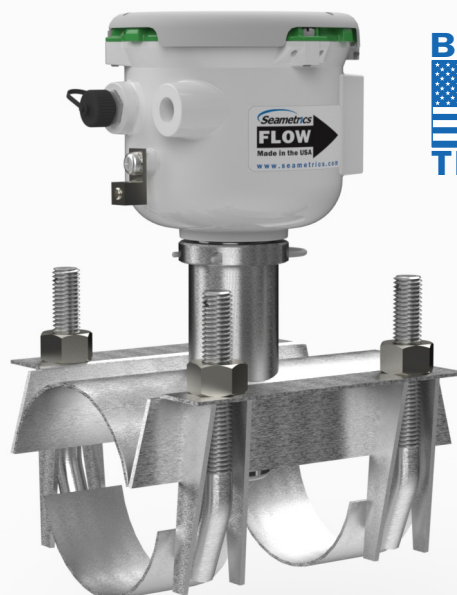
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