



By Emily Bolda

WQA continues to expand and improve facilities

Work began in 2010 to make more efficient use of space in the WQA headquarters.

Improvements Underway

The Water Quality Assn.'s (WQA) international headquarters, located in Lisle, Ill., has recently been undergoing some improvements. WQA has been operating in its Lisle building since 1982. Until recently, a large portion of the building was leased out to tenants as the space was not needed.

The second floor of WQA's building currently houses WQA's Gold Seal Product Certification Program staff. This group provides third-party product certification to NSF/ANSI, WQA and other industry standards. Recently completed improvements include Gold Seal Product Certification work areas, analytical laboratory areas and in-progress IT improvements, as well as improvements to that area's HVAC system and the building's roof.

Growing Needs

WQA's Gold Seal Product Certification Staff has grown to 30 individuals, when just a few years ago there were about half that number. To handle additional space for a much larger staff, WQA needed more room for individual work areas and designated meeting and training rooms.

Work began in late fall 2010. A local contractor was hired to carry out the renovations. To create more efficient use of space, cubicles, offices, interior walls and hallways were removed and converted into new cubicle space and offices. New conference rooms and a kitchen area also were integrated. A new training room was included that could seat the entire staff and will soon include

product demonstration areas. Training materials and displays of different water treatment technologies will be installed so staff can learn hands-on about the products WQA works to test and certify. These renovations also provide enhanced flexibility and efficiency in communication.

Other rearrangements were made in the building in order to give more storage and working space to WQA's laboratory. Other laboratory improvements were made to augment significant renovations performed in the laboratory, which were completed in early 2009.

Enhanced Capabilities

Over the past few years, WQA also has been acquiring additional analytical equipment to keep up with an increased workload and to keep the majority of analytical work done on site. These instruments are used to analyze samples created from product testing, whether product performance and contaminant reduction or materials safety (extraction) testing. These instruments also are used for routine analysis of water samples brought in through the WQA laboratory's Water Analysis Program.

The WQA laboratory is equipped with an ion chromatograph, which

measures concentrations of certain anions; an ICP/MS, which can measure concentrations of most elements at a low level; and an X-ray fluorescence (XRF) analyzer, which is used to evaluate the composition of materials. The WQA laboratory recently purchased a new gas chromatograph/mass spectrometer (GC/MS).

To house these instruments, the laboratory needed proper additional space, including a segregated room for each instrument to guard against contamination from surrounding activities, and a general sample preparation and storage area. The new analytical area includes a dedicated HVAC system, which will have carbon air filters. This new area also is equipped with motion-activated lighting in order to decrease energy use. WQA's laboratory will be evaluating the acquisition of additional analytical equipment in the near future to further expand its capabilities.

LIMS Implementation

One more improvement is the installation of advanced computer software and a database to manage certification and laboratory testing processes. The type of product chosen is a laboratory information management system (LIMS). This system will serve as the interface to WQA Gold Seal Certification work processes and administrative functions, as well as the laboratory's data, instruments, analyses and reports.

LIMS can manage the majority of the tasks that make up the product testing and certification process. It is also a powerful tool for performing trending, tracking, comparisons and transfers of information, management tasks, work scheduling and for quality assurance and control purposes. Once the system is up and running, it is expected to decrease turnaround time on projects by increasing the efficiency of workplace processes. This will help WQA's Gold Seal Certification Program further improve with better service and increased testing capacity and capability. *wqp*

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