



NEWS RELEASE

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ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT NAMED 2020 SPECIAL DISTRICTS AWARD WINNER FOR VIRTUAL OUTREACH RESPONSE TO COVID-19

FOUNTAIN VALLEY, Calif. (Nov. 2, 2020) – The Orange County Water District (OCWD; the District) was recognized as a Special Districts Award Winner by AT&T and Government Technology Magazine. This prestigious program acknowledges excellence in innovation and leadership for special district agencies across the country. The award was granted in the category, Technology Innovation: Citizens, which commends the use of technology to enhance services to the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. OCWD was applauded for its virtual outreach response, which includes a robust tour program, water webinars and more.

“It’s an honor to be recognized for our efforts to quickly and effectively adapt to the challenges of interacting with the community during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said OCWD President Vicente Sarmiento. “We’re committed to community education and outreach and are proud of our success in maintaining these efforts through technology and innovation,” he added.

While access to OCWD and Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS) facilities has been restricted in accordance with national, state and local guidelines, OCWD’s goal of public education remains a priority. In response, OCWD created a wide range of virtual programs.

One of OCWD’s most popular methods for interacting with the public is through tours of the GWRS, the largest potable reuse facility in the world. Traditionally, more than 4,000 people participated in an in-person tour of the facility annually. To replace this experience, a technical and a general video of the GWRS were created. Tours can be viewed on-demand or guests can register to participate in a Zoom format where the audience watches a tour video and then engages in a live question and answer session led by staff. Virtual tours are held monthly, and customized tours may be scheduled to accommodate groups and organizations. Comprehensive tour offerings may be viewed on [OCWD’s website](#).

Furthering efforts to stay engaged with the public, OCWD created a free monthly water webinar series. The [webinars](#) are recorded, making them available to audiences around the world. Additional programs designed in response to the pandemic include creating a [COVID-19 resources webpage](#) that includes multilingual factsheets, videos and a press kit; online student education programs; virtual community and industry presentations; and hosting District meetings virtually.

OCWD will be recognized as an award winner at the virtual 2020 Year in Review & Recognition Summit on December 15, 2020.

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About the Special Districts Program

AT&T and Government Technology collaborate to create the Special Districts Program, the first program designed for special district leaders across the United States. The 38,000 nationwide special districts, such as port authorities, water, transit and park districts, make up the largest portion of government agencies. Through media, custom regional and national events, and an awards program, special district leaders nationwide connect, share and learn from one another. Learn more about the program at <https://www.govtech.com/districts/>.

About OCWD

The Orange County Water District is committed to enhancing Orange County's groundwater quality and reliability in an environmentally friendly and economical manner. The following cities rely on the groundwater basin, managed by OCWD, to provide 77% of their water demands: Anaheim, Buena Park, Costa Mesa, Cypress, Fountain Valley, Fullerton, Garden Grove, Huntington Beach, Irvine, La Palma, Los Alamitos, Newport Beach, Orange, Placentia, Santa Ana, Seal Beach, Stanton, Tustin, Villa Park, Westminster, and Yorba Linda. For more information about OCWD, please visit www.ocwd.com, like @OCWaterDistrict on Facebook, follow @OCWDWaterNews on Twitter, follow @OCWD on Instagram, and follow Orange County Water District on LinkedIn.

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