



## A Note from Huffman Engineering, Inc.

Hello,

As historic spring flooding hit the Midwest, the Papillion Creek Water Resource Recovery Facility was evacuated resulting in millions of untreated sewage dumping into the Missouri River. This newsletter's [feature article](#) will touch on the recovery efforts and how the plant is moving forward.

This month's spotlight is on one of our Professional Engineers, Jim Fricke. He has been with Huffman Engineering for 10 years and works in the water/wastewater industry with a background in power system design.

For previous newsletters, new press releases, or to learn more about us and what we can offer you, visit our [website](#). Or give us a call at (402) 464-6823.

Sincerely,

*Wendy & Howard for  
the Huffman Engineering Team*

Huffman Engineering, Inc.  
5301 N. 57th St.  
Lincoln, NE 68507  
Phone: (402) 464-6823

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# Huffman Joins Flood Recovery Efforts

Historic Spring flooding in the Midwest brought damage to more than personal property. Infrastructure was damaged and services interrupted. Flooding at the Papillion Creek Water Resource Recovery Facility (Papio WRRF), located in Sarpy County south of Omaha required the plant to be evacuated.

This resulted in approximately 65 million gallons of raw, untreated sewage to flow into the Missouri River untreated each day from March 15th through mid-April. While clean-up efforts continued around the state, Omaha Mayor, Jean Stothert, emphasized the need to bring the Papio plant up and running and do it quickly.



Huffman Engineering, Inc. was part of the team called in, first to assess damage, and then to help restore processes to the plant. Parts of the facility had been submerged under more than 8 feet of floodwater damaging pumps, motors, and critical electrical control components. Plant personnel were able to access the plant beginning March 26th, and they saw the damage was extensive. Current estimates to restore the plant to pre-flood conditions are at 35 million dollars.

“To do the work well we were required to be both flexible and calm while maintaining the sense of urgency of the situation,” said Jim Fricke, P.E., who leads the Huffman Engineering effort. “Because this was and is a recovery effort, things change daily. We have to listen well before reacting and provide input that is proactive and forward-thinking so others could make good decisions.”

When levees near the plant were topped on March 15th and plant personnel were evacuated, it was unclear how much of the facility would need to be restored. Restoring power to the systems was a critical first step. Being able to bring the different control components back online was more complicated and required controls expertise. Processes controlled by PLCs, and signals to and from equipment have to be systematically brought back online. Flow, level and pressure instruments function together to operate the plant effectively.

Restoring power to the plant was staged in several steps. The electrical contractor first used portable generators to bring power to vital processes. In subsequent steps, OPPD (Omaha Public Power District) had brought power to the plant and as electrical gear was repaired or replaced, power could be restored. As equipment begins to operate, Huffman Engineering’s ongoing role is to help assess and restore the controls for the equipment. Flood damaged equipment that is powered up could potentially result in damage to that equipment, the controls and the instrumentation on the system.

Contacted by the City of Omaha and the general contractor, Huffman Engineering, Inc. pulled personnel off other projects and redirected effort toward restoring plant function. Unlike project work, where a detailed direction is usually developed before work begins, this work changes and grows as damage is uncovered.

“It was not the optimal time to pull people off of other work,” explained Fricke, “but we were committed to getting the plant operational and have had several people onsite almost every day. We understood the need to move quickly and purposefully.

[\*\*READ FULL ARTICLE\*\*](#)

## Employee Spotlight: Jim Fricke

This month Huffman Engineering is excited to shine the light on one of our licensed Professional Engineers, Jim Fricke. Jim has over 25 years of experience as an electrical engineer, including roles as project engineer, project manager, and team leader in both the automation and building system industries. Jim is a licensed Professional Engineer in several different states: Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska.

At the end of his Navy enlistment, Jim returned to Lincoln not far from Tecumseh where he grew up. There, he attended the University of Nebraska. He began working for Huffman Engineering in 1996. At that time Jim primarily worked on several material handling and pharmaceutical projects. Jim left Huffman Engineering in 1998 only to return in 2012. After his return, Jim switched his focus to the water/wastewater industry where he now serves as an Industry Specialist and Project Manager.



With his emphasis being on the water/wastewater industry, Jim has completed numerous projects for several large cities in Nebraska including the City of Omaha where he was involved with the [Schedule B1 and B2 Missouri River Wastewater Treatment Plant CSO \(Clean Solutions for Omaha\) project](#) and several large Metropolitan Utilities District projects in Omaha. However, Jim also has a background in power system design and has managed projects where Huffman Engineering provided electrical design, arc flash and engineering studies.

Jim holds a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, was an Aviation Electronics Technician in the Navy, and attended Southeast Community College - Milford for an Associate of Applied Science degree in Electronic Engineering Technology.

"Jim has several outstanding characteristics. One is the ability to see the big picture with complex projects and develop the proper sequence for successful completion, with the understanding of power systems, controls, and instrumentation to ensure correct applications," said Howard Huffman, President of Huffman Engineering. "He [Jim] also has the ability to work with people in a supportive and encouraging manner; he explains difficult concepts in a way that can be understood and is very willing to help others succeed on their tasks."

When not at work Jim's hobbies and family life keep him busy. He has been married over 28 years to his wife Loretta and has three boys: Jacob (15), Nathan (19), Travis (23) and the newest addition to Fricke family, their dog, Bailey a miniature Australian shepherd.

Having grown up watching the Braves, Jim developed a love for baseball. Jim ended up coaching all three of his boys for over 15 years. Baseball isn't the family's only hobby. They enjoy going to Christian music concerts as much as possible. "Rarely does one happen in Lincoln that we don't attend," Jim said, "it's a great way for us to be together as a family and strengthen our faith." Nature and amusement parks are also on the list. Nearly every vacation in the last ten years included amusement parks, arboretum, botanical gardens, numerous hikes, and parks. Jim added that of course after a day of an amusement park, it's the ability to slow life down and enjoy being together as a family that tops off any vacation. With his oldest son, Travis (who has a horticulture degree), you can find Jim immersed in



landscaping and yard work and learning more about shrubs and plants as they complete projects for not only their home, but others as well.

When asked what he likes best about Huffman Engineering, Jim is quick to mention it's the people that make the company what it is. "We have an excellent group of very talented, great people, whom I am very proud to be a part of."





## Other News

Two more Huffman man Engineers, Keith Mandachit & Jay Steinman, are now licensed Professional Engineers in the State of Nebraska.

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Daniel Hruby, P.E. receives his second Professional Engineer license in the State of Wyoming.

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Connect with Us



(402) 464-6823  
5301 N 57th St Ste 101 Lincoln, Nebraska 68507  
112 Inverness Circle East, Suite E, Englewood, CO 80112

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