

# MSWD Celebrates Water Professionals Appreciation Week

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Celebrated by water agencies throughout the state, Water Professionals Appreciation Week (*October 7-15*) brings public awareness to the important role water industry professionals and local public water agencies perform.

“We are proud to honor the men and women who work every day to safely and reliably deliver water and wastewater services to our customers,” said MSWD Board President Russ Martin. “It’s their hard work and dedication that allows the District to fulfill its mission to provide, protect, and preserve our precious water resources.”

Water Professionals Appreciation Week was established by Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCR) 80, approved by the Legislature in 2017. The resolution, authored by Sen. Bill Dodd (D-Napa), was sponsored by an ACWA-led coalition that included WaterReuse California, California Municipal Utilities Association, California Association of Sanitation Agencies, California Water Association, and the California Water Environment Association.

To show its appreciation, MSWD is highlighting several employees on its social media platforms and website. Whether it’s working with customers out in the field, collecting and analyzing samples, or shaping complex policies and regulations, there is a place in California’s water industry for anyone interested in managing and protecting this life-sustaining resource.

For more information, please visit [MSWD Careers](#).

## EMPLOYEE STORIES



# I am a WATER PROFESSIONAL



Cynthia Acosta,  
Office Specialist II

I like to listen and get a better picture of what customers really need so that I can give them the best service possible.



## Cynthia Acosta

### *Office Specialist II*

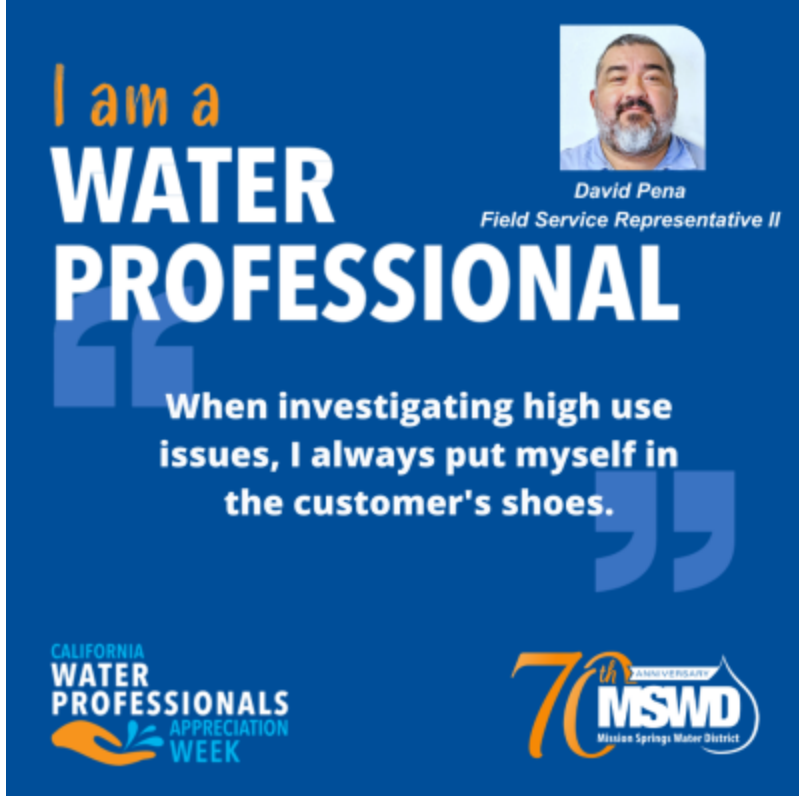
Going with the flow has been the mantra of Office Specialist II Cynthia Acosta, who seems to effortlessly handle any new challenge that comes her way. Since joining the MSWD team in August 2022 as a temporary employee, her willingness to learn and her adaptability have made her a key resource in the District. Originally hired to support the Engineering and Human Resources Departments, Cynthia has also worked in Operations, Accounting, and Customer Service.

Wearing multiple hats is nothing new to Cynthia, as she previously owned and operated her own consulting business, providing administrative services to small businesses before joining MSWD.

Her "can do" attitude helped secure Cynthia a full-time position in February 2023. She's grateful for her time and experience in the different areas she has supported. "At first, I thought of it as a job, but as I got exposed to more and more of the organization and learned more about the water and wastewater services we provide, I realized just how important the District's role is in our community," said Cynthia.

According to Cynthia, the most rewarding part of her work is using her bilingual skills to help Spanish-speaking customers understand the process at hand and ensure their needs are clearly defined. "Sometimes customers don't understand all that goes into providing service. I like to listen and better understand what they need so that I can give them the best service possible."

Cynthia says she is inspired and impressed by her coworkers, especially how long many of them have been with the District. "It's common for employees to work 20-30 years at the District. It's fun to hear about the different hats and roles they have had along the way."



## David Pena

### ***Field Service Representative II***

They say that everyone loves a good mystery, but a more accurate turn of phrase would be that everyone loves a good solution. Just ask Field Service Representative II David Pena, who has worked at MSWD for the past 18.5 years. As part of his regular duties, David works with his team on a number of customer-related services that take place in the field, including meter charge-outs and inspections, backflow inspections, and new customer connections and shutoffs.

However, one of his job's more interesting and rewarding parts involves high-use investigations. Using data from our new advanced metering system, David can spot high-use patterns and alert customers of potential leaks or problems before they become a large issue.

One of the biggest things he says he does is look for patterns. "A continuous flow typically means there's a leak someplace," said David. "Most of the time, it's an irrigation problem, leaky toilet or pool that's the culprit."

According to David, customers often don't know they have an issue until they receive his call or door hanger. "You can't always see a pool of water to know you have a leak. We live in a desert, and the ground can quickly absorb a leak."

David says that small leaks add up, especially when running around the clock, and sometimes they can double or even triple a customer's bill. Catching and avoiding problems like this is one of the most rewarding parts of David's job. "I always put myself in the customer's shoes while looking for clues. Most of the time, customers are grateful for the help."

A self-described people person, David says customer service is an essential element for any successful business. "My goal is always to find a resolution or good outcome. If I can't find the problem, I like to point the customer in the right direction and let them know we are here for them no matter what they need."



**Ana Murillo**  
***Accounting Technician***

To Accounting Technician Ana Murillo, MSWD represents one important thing—community. Being the community's water and wastewater provider is something Ana takes great pride in.

Before joining MSWD as a temporary employee in Feb 2022 and then later transitioning to a regular employee in Oct 2023, Ana says she didn't give much thought to where her water came from or where her wastewater went. She just expected that these services would be there when she turned on the tap or emptied the

sink. Once she came on board MSWD, she quickly learned all that goes into making these services available.

Being able to be part of an organization that provides critical services is something that Ana enjoys. "As customers, we use water every day, but most of the time, we don't think about where it comes from or what all goes into providing those services," said Ana.

Having never worked for a public agency before, Ana enjoys knowing that her work is impacting customers and helping the local community through her profession.

For the past 12 years, Ana has worked alongside her husband, running a youth soccer program, and is a club board member. In her spare time, she manages the rec-level league and is in charge of everything from uniforms to sign-ups. "Serving others and helping the community is something I have always loved," added Ana.

Having a connection and sense of community is something that is important to Ana. Last December, she participated in the MSWD Holiday Parade Committee and rode on the District's award-winning float. "It was amazing to see all the residents of Desert Hot Springs lining the streets and cheering for one another."

When asked about the water industry's future, Ana said that adopting new technology will be paramount for all water agencies. "Since the pandemic, we've seen behavior changes, with more and more customers preferring to pay bills online and not face-to-face. While we work to embrace these changes, it will be important that we keep our connection with the public and look for new and innovative ways to make a difference in the lives of our customers."

# I am a WATER PROFESSIONAL



Jason Weekley  
Lead Field Operations Technician

Seeing my coworkers succeed  
and grow is very rewarding.



## Jason Weekley *Lead Field Operations Technician*

According to MSWD's Jason Weekley, every day is an opportunity to learn something new. As part of his everyday duties as a Lead Field Operations Technician, Jason works with and oversees his crew as they perform various maintenance-related tasks, including water valve and service line replacements and hydrant installations. Depending upon the time of the year, they also perform annual maintenance on the system to ensure safe and continued water delivery to our customers.

While performing these duties, Jason prioritizes working with his team and educating newer employees. "Mentoring and helping is a big part of what I do. Seeing newer staff react and know what to do when we arrive at a job site means that I am doing my job right," said Jason.

Witnessing this "knowledge transfer" is one of the best parts of Jason's job. And while he and his team do their best to plan most jobs weeks in advance, sometimes an issue that takes precedence will move to the front of the line. "Seeing my coworkers succeed and grow is very rewarding. When they better understand what is going on, they can respond better when an issue or emergency happens."

Being part of the MSWD team for the past 3.5 years, Jason says he is still learning about the MSWD system from his supervisor, Jeff Nutter, who has been with the District for over 29 years. "Jeff has a great understanding of our system, which allows him to react during emergencies and know what to do in tough situations like when Tropical Storm Hilary came through."

This camaraderie allows Jason and his team to succeed despite the hot, humid, and windy conditions they sometimes find themselves working in. "We spend 8-9 hours a day with each other and have a great crew that will work together to get any job done."

# I am a WATER PROFESSIONAL



Lisa Pelton  
Customer Service Representative II

I enjoy helping customers on a one-on-one level and providing them with solutions to any questions they might have.



## Lisa Pelton

### Customer Service Representative II

As a life-long resident of Desert Hot Springs, Customer Service Representative II Lisa Pelton has a special bond with her customers. To her, they are like family. They are the people she sees around town at special events, the post office, or even the grocery store.

Having been at MSWD for the last 20.5 years, Lisa has worked in several departments, including Engineering and Accounting. Still, like a lucky penny, she always returns to her favorite area, Customer Service.

Many of our customers know Lisa and her family personally, and they often ask to speak to her by name. “I enjoy helping customers on a one-on-one level and providing them with solutions to any issues they might have,” said Lisa. “This takes listening and actually hearing what they have to say.”

Lisa has seen a lot of changes at MSWD, especially as we have adopted new technology. She tells stories about how they used to print the bills on perforated card stock, which they would then rip apart and place in envelopes for mailing at the post office. Lisa’s favorite change has been the adoption of the new advanced metering infrastructure that allows customers to see their usage broken down by the hour. “I look at my own usage all the time to see how efficient my household is, and I have all the automatic text alerts set.”

According to Lisa, being local does have its advantages. “Living in the community gives me a special connection to our customers. Throughout the years, I have developed an extra layer of trust and commitment that may not have happened had I lived elsewhere.”