

## WATER ENVIRONMENT FEDERATION

### GEORGE W. BURKE, JR. AWARD

...to recognize municipal and industrial wastewater facilities or individuals for active and effective safety.

#### **Rick Hidalgo, P.E.**

Rick Hidalgo is the president and co-founder of Signature Automation, LLC in Addison, Texas. He is a licensed control systems engineer and holds a Bachelor of Science degree in electrical engineering from the University of Texas at Dallas.

Rick began his career in 1988 working for the Systems, Engineering and Construction Division of Johnson Controls, Inc. JCI had a proprietary distributed control system that was marketed primarily to the water/wastewater industry. He worked on several projects for utilities throughout the United States. His roles on these projects consisted of various facets of systems integration inclusive of graphics development, controls programming, system commissioning, operator training and ongoing support.

As the use of non-proprietary systems using custom off the shelf Human Machine Interface and Programmable Logic Controller packages became more prevalent in the industry, Rick expanded his knowledge of industrial control systems beyond the proprietary JCI offering that he used early in his career. Although most of the projects throughout his career have focused on the water/wastewater industry, he also has had the opportunity to work in other industries such as automotive, HVAC, energy management, semiconductor and power monitoring.

In 1997, Rick transitioned from the contractor to the design side of the business by accepting a position with a national consulting firm. In this capacity, he worked with clients throughout the U.S., focusing on the water/wastewater industry. He continued his love of programming by leading the programming efforts of several projects, first as a lead control engineer, then as a project manager, and later as a regional group leader overseeing both the design and programming aspects of his firm's automation

group. He has helped clients design their systems from the ground up by assisting during the initial master planning, conceptual design, detailed design, implementation and final commissioning phases.

In addition to working with many great people, Rick often has stated one of his greatest joys is seeing some of the control systems he worked on early in his career still in use today. In fact, in some instances, he has designed the replacement of systems he previously programmed and commissioned. He jokes however, that this is also a sign of getting old when "you are replacing systems you previously put in."

In recent years, Rick has gained an interest in seeking cyber security solutions for the water sector control systems. He has provided numerous technical papers and presentations on this topic through his active involvement in these efforts. Former WEAT presidents John Bennett and Curtis Smalley asked him to co-chair the WEAT Safety & Security Committee. He willingly accepted this position in 2014 and throughout the last year, the committee has proactively sought to inform and educate the industry on this topic by holding bi-monthly webinars on various issues related to cyber security.

In addition to his role with the Safety & Security Committee, Rick enjoys volunteering his time as a member of the WEAT Electrical & Instrumentation committee and as a volunteer mentor for graduate and undergraduate students at his alma mater as part of the University of Texas at Dallas' Power of Two Management Mentor Program. Previously, he also volunteered his time to help develop the initial Principles and Practices of Engineering exam in software engineering that is now offered by Texas and many other states, as a member of the IEEE Software Engineering Licensure Examination Development Committee.