# H.R. LaBounty Safety Awards Nomination Form

## Nomination Deadlines:

**Spring Awards:** **February 3, 2025**

**Fall Awards:** **September 2, 2025**

## Agency: Sweetwater Authority

## Project/Initiative Title: J 180 Valve Popper Tool

Implementation Date: 5/1/2025

Cost to Implement: 0

Staff Time Required: 4 hrs

Number of Employees/Facilities Impacted: 33

## Employee/Department/Committee Nominated:

Name(s): Jomar DePaz and Victor Gomez Hernandez

Job Title/Department: Customer Service Leadworker (JD) Utility Worker II / Welder (VGH)

## Nomination Summary

*Write a brief summary of your project/initiative. Clearly state the problem/hazard recognized by the nominee and the specific reasons that they initiated corrective action.*

To create a safer and more effective way to turn the J 180 valve. On multiple occasions meter readers and field staff are required to shut off the water supply at the meter so staff can maintain our internal meter maintenance and testing program. Our goal is to replace meters between 15 to 20 years of age, approximately 2,100 per year. In order to achieve this, the J-180 valve needs to be turned and is almost always frozen or stuck due to corrosion. This creates a hazard from ergonomic positioning and potential injury from overexertion to the employee's hands and wrist.

*Describe the specific actions taken to resolve the problem(s) or challenge(s). Share the best practices that made this initiative successful for the agency and its impact.*

Jomar and Victor redesigned and fabricated a revised version of a current tool. The current tool "poppers" use two metal plates to that sandwiches the J 180 valve and forces the operating nut upward and out of the corroded body. The new design is smaller, has a pocket built into the bottom plate, and extended legs. With the tools smaller design, it can be placed around a J180 with little to no digging. The pocket in the bottom plate keeps the poppers centered and stable around the J 180 to prevent movement or slipping. The tool has two extended legs welded on the plates so the employee can work at or just above ground level instead of inside a meter box. This greatly reduces hand and wrist fatigue and injury. The tool has been adopted to fit different valve sizes.

*State whether the hazard was reduced with engineering controls, introduced a new administrative or work procedure, or relied on personal protective equipment to solve the problem.*

The hazard of hand and wrist injury has been greatly reduced through engineering controls.

*Describe any extraordinary circumstances that made this nominee's safety accomplishments significant. Describe whether the nominee influenced safety in the workplace, encouraged employee participation in safety efforts, obtained organizational "buy in" to implement the solution.*

Since this type of valve is encountered frequently and by several employees and departments, Jomar and Victor displayed their safety awareness by designing a better tool that assist their coworkers from sustaining potential ergonomic and or hand and wrist injuries.

*Describe whether the project/initiative addressed a hazard or exposure included in the JPIA Commitment to Excellence Program.*

☒Office/Field Ergonomics

☐Vehicle Operations

☐Slip/trip/falls – falls from heights

☐Emergency Readiness/Wildfire Prevention

☐Other:

*List and attach any supporting materials that you feel are important for the reviewers to gain a complete picture of the nomination. Digital photos, supporting documentation, sample forms, etc.*

**Nominated by:** Sweetwater Authority Safety and Risk
**Date:**8/26/2025

**General Manager:** Carlos Quintero **Date:**8/26/2025

**Please email this form with supporting documents and digital photos (jpg) to tlofing@acwajpia.com.**