USGS Virtual Classes - What Remote Students Need to Know   **7/6/17**

Attending a live, virtual class, broadcast from the USGS National Training Center (NTC) extends the reach of your learning.   We understand that avoiding travel has its advantages. As a USGS employee, you have likely taken multiple classes in the classroom setting. Your learning skills are just as important in the virtual classroom. There are a few significant differences for virtual class participants and they are best handled with a bit of advance planning. The information in this document is provided to identify those differences so you can maximize your learning.

What is a Live Virtual Classroom? Attending a class virtually, as it's being taught from the USGS NTC in Denver, CO. provides the same access to learning as for those sitting in the classroom. As a virtual participant, you will hear the entire class presentation, view the presentation slides and be able to ask questions when you wish. Although the instructors cannot see you, they can respond to your questions via chat or via speakers in the actual classroom. You will also have the opportunity to work on all classroom exercises.

How does it Work?   OED uses an enhanced version of "USGS WebEx" to live stream courses. Before any virtual course OED will provide a schedule of testing sessions for remote students. Our goal is to familiarize remote students with the online tools and work out any bugs. The test takes no longer than 10-15 minutes. To access the actual course you will be provided a link and password. From the home page you can view the day's schedule. Navigate to your training and click "Join" on the far right. Enter your name and email address, and click "Join." A few plug-ins need to be loaded, so click "yes" to load. Once you have joined the class your name will appear on the far right and the slide deck will appear on the left. For audio we use the "Reston Talk" audio conferencing bridge. This information will be sent to you prior to the training via email and will also be included in the "WebEx" chat window at the bottom right of your screen. You are now ready to take your class!

Responsibilities of Remote Participants: Registration and pre-class preparation are the same for all attendees. C ourse materials will either be provided via an FTP site or NTC staff will ship them to you in advance. If the materials are digital, you will be provided time to download them and print to hardcopy if you wish. As always, students should familiarize themselves with the course outline and materials before the class. It's also important to login at the requested times. We ask that you login 30 minutes before the class is scheduled to start on the first day so we can address any last minute questions. You are highly encouraged to ask questions during the class. You might need to practice a little patience when you ask a question via the chat screen, as he/she might be simultaneously answering questions from other virtual participants.

If possible, we recommend that you team up with another person from your office to take your class remotely. Also, make sure your supervisor is aware of your course duration, start/end times and your need to stay on your computer each day for the entire class session. Just so you know, we encourage instructors to call on remote participants by name. Active participation helps keep you engaged and learning!

For multi-day classes, at the end of the first day you will be invited to attend a debriefing with your instructors to provide feedback. This allows instructors to make minor changes, if necessary, for the following class day.

Virtual Participants - What's Needed:
-Computer
      -2 GHZ processor speed minimum
      -Minimum of 1 GB network connectivity
      -Minimum of Windows 7 SP-2 Installed (all Windows updates must be current)
-A test of the video stream in advance of the class
-An informed and supportive supervisor

Technical Assistance: During your class, NTC technical support is available in real time via telephone.

Associated Costs: The advertised class tuition indicated in DOI LEARN applies for all virtual participants.

NTC Staff are committed to making your virtual class experience as close to sitting in the actual classroom as possible.

Good Learning! *The NTC Staff*