

EFFECTIVELY MANAGING INVENTORY SPACE AND COSTS

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Managing water pipe clamps and couplings inventory is an issue that all water municipalities need to control. With a small inventory, municipalities can save on space and money but if there is a hitch with deliveries or a sudden spike in demand, installers won't have what they need for repairs. Municipalities often have tight budgets, meaning that a larger inventory to better supply clamps and couplings is not an option. This is especially true in smaller municipalities where the amount of space for inventory can be very tight.

This balancing act between cost and space can be tricky but with these five tips, municipalities can ensure they have the repair products they need while keeping storage costs down.

1. EVALUATE HOW MUCH STOCK IS NEEDED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Before deciding on how much inventory you need, take a careful look at the demand for repair products and when they are used most frequently. Look at your orders over the course of the last three or four years. Do you notice periods when the demand for certain clamps or couplings is high, and other periods when it's low?

See if you can manage inventory based on past records and decide which products should be in high supply and which ones can be lower. In addition, knowing the size and types of pipes that are in the ground can help predict what kind of repair tools to store.

2. USE REPAIR PRODUCTS THAT CAN BE USED IN A NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS

If you store clamps and couplings that can be used in a number of applications, then you don't need to keep as many repair products in stock and space is reduced. There are products on the market that offer full transition couplings that will fit pipes of varying types and sizes within your water or wastewater infrastructure. There are also products that have the versatility to either join or repair pipes.

These space savings are significant as one of these products can take the place of three traditional ones given its capacity to be used on a variety of pipes and repair situations.

3. TAKE WEATHER PATTERNS INTO CONSIDERATIONS

Weather can play a key role when repair supplies will be in high demand and how fast you can obtain them. Repairs are frequent when the ground shifts during the spring thaw, other times of the year when the weather is harsh (e.g. hurricane season). Keep in mind when ordering products that orders will be harder to fill when weather conditions will get in the way of quick deliveries. It only takes one snowed-in regional shipping hub to delay orders across the entire nation.

4. IMPLEMENT A STREAMLINED PURCHASING SYSTEM

Use software programs for both inventorying product and ordering. Small utilities may rely on a paper checklist and a clipboard or simply go by memory, which is unreliable. Make it easy to keep track of supplies and ordering so there is no confusion around ordering supplies. Assign a number for each product you order to supply categorization and keep track.

5. MAKE SURE ORDERING IS DONE BY JUST ONE PERSON

Delegate one person to be the purchasing manager to ensure multiple orders aren't placed unnecessarily. The designated purchasing manager should keep track of inventory and be informed of any changes in supply needs. A good purchasing manager will also ask vendors if they offer discounts for buying in volume or for paying the entire invoice within a specified amount of time.

Regardless of the size of your inventory, inventory is important to manage to keep costs down and ensure repair parts are available when crews need them. By following these tips, you can ensure that costs are lower and easily managed while ensuring you have the parts when a pipe break occurs. 💧💧💧