



"YES! YOU CAN HELP!" CONTINUED

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Last *Aquafacts* Issue, Winter 2013/14, I began a discussion on water leak detection and at the end I said I would expand on the topic more.

As I said, I often hear that a leak is a small one and it will cost more to repair it than the lost water is worth. This is wrong and dangerous thinking for many reasons. Let's look at some of the major considerations as to why a competent leak detection program is not only worthwhile but an absolute necessity for your water system.

Health risk. This to me is number one. Think about it. If treated water can get out of your pipe under pressure, then there is a provision for untreated water to get back in under the right circumstances. Granted there will have to be a negative pressure circumstance for this to happen. No way? Well, how about a water main break where shut down of the system is required? A fire with heavy drawdown? Hydrant flushing activities? You can think of more. Every single leak, no matter what size, serves to compromise the reliability of your water system. I know of public water systems that have been 'let go' for so long that now even a small new service leak presents operational difficulties. You've heard it said: "Pay me now or pay me later!" Do you really think it will be less expensive next year than now? Is it worth risking a 'boil water' order?

Lost (forfeited!) revenue. Do you need to raise your water rates? Maybe not! You have paid the expense of pumping, treating, measuring, and transporting a commodity to the point where you should expect to recover your expenses and plan a little for the future. BUT- that leak is preventing the sale of your commodity! A faulty or inaccurate water meter is even worse! With that, your commodity is actually delivered to your customer for their use and enjoyment while you get nothing but the bill! I suppose Walmart would be satisfied if their cash registers were ONLY ten to fifteen percent inaccurate. Hmmm.

Expense of repair. Is your assistance to the water technician (I still like that word, technician, ooh goose bumps!) really worth your effort? After all, it's their job to find the leak. Leak detection is NOT an exact science. Each situation is unique unto itself! If

you are paying an hourly or daily charge it only makes sense to reduce their time on the job. Suppose we do it for you for a letter of appreciation and an attaboy or two? A 'dry hole' costs you greatly! You have the unnecessary expense of labor and equipment hours, backfill materials, compaction equipment, asphalt replacement, and further maintenance of the 'dry hole' site! Is quality assistance worth your time? Most certainly!

Safety risk. This consideration should not be last on this list but I wanted to leave its importance on your mind. Our systems in New York, are for the most part, very old and were constructed under very different traffic times and patterns. That Model 'A' at 13 miles per hour was not much of a problem. If you were really threatened you could most likely outrun it. Now, the main is still in the same place but topside, things are very different! **ANYTIME** you put personnel or equipment out in the flow of traffic you are creating a seriously dangerous situation to your personnel **and** the traveling public! A 'work site' is an unnatural situation that the traveler may not be accustomed to, or familiar with, and they are quite possibly going more than 13 miles per hour with God knows what on their mind. No texting or other type of distracted driving I hope. Unfortunately, it will likely be necessary to enter the flow of traffic to make the final repair but if you can help the 'Technician' (hmmm) to keep these 'dry' instances to a minimum it will be safer for everybody involved, you and J.Q. Public!

Well, there you have it for now. **Yes, you can help!** And it will behoove you to do so! If you are not sure, ask your technician what you can do ahead of time to make things better and more accurate. Are they experienced in this type of work? Is their equipment up to date, reliable, and accurate? There is a great deal riding on it!

If these issues are properly addressed we can have safer drinking water, better revenue retention, fewer repair expenses, and most of all, less safety risk to our employees (Rural Water's and yours) and the traveling public. It will yield better results and be well worth your time and effort to help in the effort all you can. Maybe that rate increase can be tabled for a while? Naaah! No way.

'Till next time, Dan Tousley, Circuit Rider 💧💧💧