



## MAINTENANCE

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**M**aintenance: the process of maintaining or preserving something. By definition this seems like something we should all be able to understand and be able to set our goals to obtain. Unfortunately, I know that in your world of get everything done with less (money, tools, help and especially time), this becomes a very difficult or even impossible goal to achieve. That being said, I guess we have to prioritize what really needs to get done. This past March 5th, I was called to an emergency situation which would have been greatly reduced had this theory been applied. It started on the night of the 4th, when the Operations Specialist got the call that people were starting to run out of water. I know we have all gotten this call. This one turned out a little different than most however, when in less than an hour, the entire 300,000 gallon storage tank was completely empty and the whole village was out of water. The Operations Specialist and his assistant frantically searched all over the village looking for the problem. For whatever reason, in their panicked state, neither of them thought to isolate the storage tank and wells from the system so that they could start to recover water in the tank needed to be able to find the leak. Somewhere around 5 am the Operations Specialist was rushed to the hospital after suffering from what appeared to be a heart attack caused by the stress of not being able to locate the leak.

His assistant called in a neighboring town's Water Operations Specialist who called me. I met him at 8 am and we began to get as much information as we could from the already burned out assistant about the distribution system. With that, we formed a plan to first isolate the tank and then locate and close all the main line valves we could so that when we had enough water back in the tank we could start to pin down the leak. The first valve box we opened was full of mud and ice all the way from the top to the bottom. After about an hour, we were able to close this valve and move on to the next one. Surprise, this one and every other one

we used that day were found in the same condition. It was close to 4 pm when we were able to finally start looking for the leak. Luckily we had found a valve that divided the Village in half earlier and there was a well on that side that we were able to turn on and get that half of town back in water with limited pressure. The leak that had caused the real problem was found within 10 minutes. It turned out to be a ring break with a large shovel sized chunk blown out of a 10 inch ductile iron pipe that had stayed below the frost line and blown out into the river about 50 feet from the road where it was located.

I know this was a long story but just think how a couple of minutes of **maintenance** could have changed this whole chain of events. If during the warm weather months all of the valve boxes had been cleaned out and those very inexpensive styrofoam plugs had been installed, the time needed to handle this situation could have been hours not days. More importantly than that is the trip to the hospital could have been avoided.

I know there are a lot of systems out there that don't even know where all of their critical main line valves are even located. Or they have been covered with blacktop or worse. Many fire hydrants are inoperable. We haven't even talked about all the necessary maintenance needed in your filter plants and pump stations. I know you are aware of the need for these things to be done and hopefully some of your mayors, board members, supervisors and council members will see this article and understand the importance of **maintenance**. All too often I see priorities placed on appearance when functionality should take precedence. I hope you will be able to find the time now that the weather has broken to take care of these and all the other issues we all too often neglect until it's too late to take care of. Remember, if you need any help in locating these lost valves, give us a call and we will be happy to assist any way we can. 💧💧