



On the Water Front

October 2016 | A Message from John Balliew, P.E., President/CEO

Accelerating Infrastructure Improvements for Reliability

The American Society of Civil Engineers gives a "D" rating to our national infrastructure for roads, bridges, airport, energy and water needs. In Texas, we fare a little better with a "C." The truth is that not enough resources are devoted to replacing aging infrastructure. We've had our own wake up calls recently here in El Paso.

Ingersoll Way resembled a river in August when a water main ruptured. Rushing water damaged the asphalt and caused the street to collapse. The 62-year-old culprit was a cast-iron pipeline that is on a long list of needed replacements. It has broken eight times since 1968.

Temporary repairs

Temporary repairs gave residents access to their driveways, and the water and sewer lines are now being replaced. The street will be repaved when the project is completed, bringing normalcy again to Ingersoll Way.

Even more troubling is a wastewater infrastructure failure, such as we experienced recently at Frontera and Doniphan. Our teams worked in difficult conditions to repair the system. It took weeks to reroute pipelines and upgrade valves and other components. For neighbors who detected an unusual odor, it was not a good time for a backyard barbecue to say the least.

Unfortunately, these situations happen more than we'd like. The average age of our infrastructure continues to trend upward. More than 700 miles of our pipe is 40 years or older; some has been in service for more than 90 years. We're rehabilitating and upgrading facilities, but it's clear that we need to do more. We estimate that more than \$350 million is needed over the next five years to rehabilitate aging infrastructure.

Improved reliability

While we take pride in the work ethic of our teams that work day and night to repair main breaks, it's in our customers' best interest – from a cost and service standpoint – to prevent such disruptions. The timely replacement of our pipes, pumps and valves improves system reliability, which reduces service disruptions and emergency repairs.

We're in the process of accelerating improvements to our aging water, wastewater and stormwater systems so we can put our community's best interest first and continue to deliver the reliable service that customers expect and deserve.



An Aug. 6 water main break destroyed portions of Ingersoll Way and Alabama Street.



A contractor's worker taps into the 42-inch Frontera Force Main to replace one of nine failed valves.



On the Water Front is a publication of El Paso Water.
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