



Perris News

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Public Works Employees Toil Behind the Scenes

They are the men and women who work for Perris residents, performing a myriad of vital duties for teen-age archers and basketball players, adult softball sluggers, motorists and animal lovers.

Perris Public Works employees often toil behind-the-scenes, completing the sorts of duties most people take for granted—from picking up stray dogs to power-washing away graffiti to painting street signs to running recreational program to patching potholes and installing street lights and repairing sprinklers at community parks and City Hall.

In Perris, just 24 employees in eight separate divisions serve in the Public Works umbrella.

Without them, the City would not look as clean, neat and inviting.

"They are the unsung heroes for certain," said Public Works Manager Daryl Hartwill. "They take great pride in their work and in providing the services that Perris residents expect and deserve. In these economic times it is a challenge, but the challenge is being met. It's very needed work they perform and they are proud of it."

The eight divisions in Public Works include animal control, streets, water, sewer, code compliance, facilities, fleet maintenance and parks. In addition to their routine duties,

Public Works employees respond to hazardous materials spills and reports of illegal dumping as well as take on special projects. In the last year, for instance, the department cleaned about 3,000 storm drains and painted thousands of street signs.

The department's total budget is about \$9 million, down more than 20 percent from a year ago as Perris has initiated City-wide budget reductions in the face of the deep and lingering recession.

Public Works employees Ignacio Alvarez and Arturo Garcia should be known as Mr. Inside and Mr. Outside. Alvarez, a fleet mechanic who keeps City vehicles humming, spends his days at the Public Works Yard on G Street. Garcia, a Maintenance Crew Leader, works in the field, repair broken locks and fences at parks, patching potholes, putting up signs and supervising other workers.

Alvarez's responsibilities include servicing and repairing 53 trucks and cars used by code compliance, animal control and other Public Works employees. He calls himself a "one-man gang" whose duties include everything from changing a tire to repairing an engine.

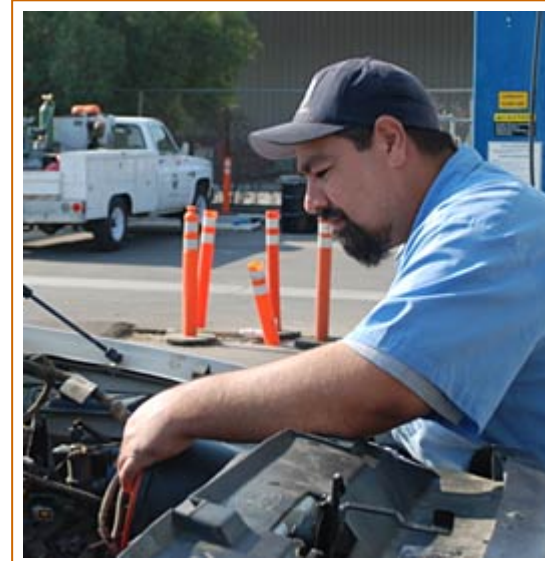
He says it's much cheaper for Perris residents to have City vehicles repaired in-house than to have an outside contractor do the work. One example: rebuilding an engine for a truck will cost the City about \$1,200 for Alvarez to finish the job. An outside job would cost double.

Using his industry contacts, he can get a set of tires for about \$500, much less than retail price. He shops around constantly for the best prices on parts from a list of vendors.

"We're always looking for the best price," Alvarez said. "It's a big task. We never really get caught up, but we manage to keep most of the balls in the air most of the time. It makes you feel good to know that you have a lot to do with limited resources but that you're able to get the job done."

Garcia spent a recent morning changing a deadbolt lock at Bob Long Park. He said Public Works employees know they must work hard every day to meet the challenges they face. He says they take pride in their work because "it makes the City look good and it makes us look good."

"We take pride in our accomplishments, even if it's the smallest thing," Garcia said. "We always try to do our best."



Ignacio Alvarez inspects an engine on one of the City's vehicle fleet.



Arturo Garcia changes a lock at Bob Long Park.



Vince Ramirez sprays away graffiti.