



Perris News

Contact: Joe Vargo, Perris Public Information Officer
Phone: 951-956-2120
jvargo@cityofperris.org

City of Perris Water Department

Perris utility workers are waging war against leaks in the City's water system.

The three-man team that makes up the City's water staff is hunting leaks wherever they spring up—from corroded water pipes, broken meters, running toilets and antiquated distribution lines and main lines.

The trio has replaced much of the Perris Water Department's aging underground infrastructure in the last several years as the department has gone high-tech to conserve water, time and expense.

The efforts are even more critical these days as California battles an entrenched drought. While it's always important in California's dry climate to use water wisely, says Public Works Manager Daryl Hartwill, during times of drought, it's absolutely vital.

"We're really trying to tighten the system up," Hartwill said.

"It's all about using water wisely and efficiently. There always will be some leaks in the system but our mission is to make it as efficient as possible."

The Perris Water Department makes do on a shoestring budget.

The Water Utility Fund budget for the current fiscal year is \$2.45 million, of which nearly two-thirds—\$1.55 million—is spent on purchasing water from Eastern Municipal Water District, the regional provider.

Perris City officials held the line on water rates for their water customers this year, despite a 12.5 percent increase from EMWD this year and a proposed similar rate hike in 2009.

"It's a department that does a lot with very little," said Mayor Daryl Busch.

The Mayor noted that the department's infrastructure including underground lines, connectors and meters require constant attention.

Most of the original system, which was built when Perris incorporated in 1911, has been replaced with new lines but many of the water mains and service lines are 40 to 50 years old.

"It requires a lot of hands-on work," Busch said. "We're proud of the job they do for our City. It's a lean department, just like the rest of the City."

Keeping on top of the water system is a daunting task.

The three City employees who work in the water department, team leader Mike Tanney, Ken Martin and Keith Frazier-Matthews, keep an eye for leaks in the 6-inch main line. Last week, the three located and patched a leak off Park Avenue and Seventh Street on the City's west side.

They've also spent a good bit of time in the last couple of years replacing 2-inch steel lines with high-tech plastic piping.

"We're three people and we know the system intimately," Tanney said. "We're busy. It's a never-ending battle to keep on top of things."

The Perris Valley Water Department is responsible for 2,400 residential and commercial hookups in the City's central core.

The department is responsible for water service from Nuevo Road to the north, Mountain Avenue to the south, Interstate 215 to the east and Navajo Road to the west. The rest of Perris is serviced by EMWD.

City employees work with their counterparts from EMWD on water-related issues and concerns.

Tanney said the water department is committed to customer service and the three technicians spend a good bit of time educating customers about the need to replace leaky toilets and outdated meters. The department also collects water samples weekly and has them tested for chlorine levels and possible impurities.

And while the water system is nearly a century old, it is forward thinking in many ways, Tanney says.

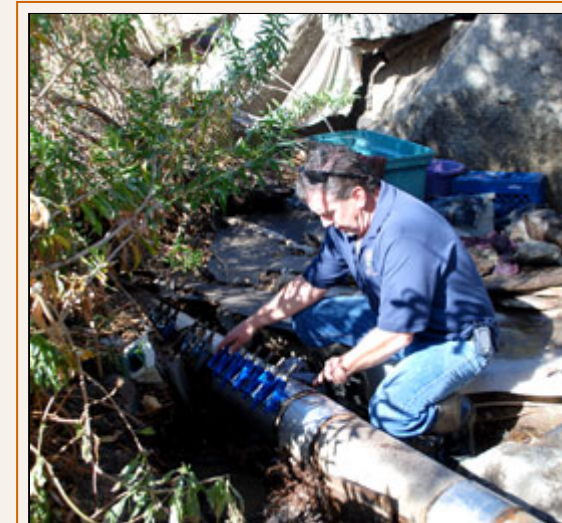
Gone, for instance, is the need to enter homes and businesses to read water meters for billing purposes. Today, new meters emit radio signals that City workers can pick up while driving past in their vehicles.

The signals provide information about water usage, which is automatically downloaded to a laptop computer for billing purposes, Tanney said.

"It saves us a lot of time," he said.



Tanney tests one of the City's sites where water is collected and analyzed for impurities.



City Water Department technician Mike Tanney inspects a repair to a water line.

###