

The Mainstream

A semiannual newsletter dedicated to enhancing water and wastewater services brought to you by

The Ypsilanti Community Utilities Authority



From The Director

YCUA's preventative maintenance program for sewer mains was recently proven highly successful in protecting area residents from sewer backups and basement flooding. The major rain event that occurred in southeastern Michigan on August 11 and 12, 2014 dropped up to four inches of rain over several hours. While many metro Detroit suburbs struggled with the massive flooding that followed, YCUA's service area was one of the few communities of its size that did not experience any sewer backups or basement flooding. YCUA is proud that its very aggressive sewer main preventative maintenance program has been rewarding for our customers by greatly reducing costly backups.

The YCUA service, maintenance, and wastewater departments have worked diligently since the implementation of this program in late 2011.



YCUA crews perform periodic sewer main inspections using remotely-controlled video cameras. If there are obstructions such as roots or grease, the sewer main is cleaned using a sewer

cleaning / vacuuming machine (shown in photo). If there is infiltration into the sewer main from cracks, holes, or leaking joints, YCUA utilizes a pipe patch product which allows for repairs of sewer mains without excavating, reducing the cost of repairs. Scheduled pump station maintenance and inspections are also performed weekly.

- Jeff Castro, YCUA Director

Annual Hydrant Inspections

This time each year, YCUA winterizes the more than 3,000 hydrants in its system and checks their operation for fire protection. The procedure involves an employee completing an inspection of the internal workings of each fire hydrant, making repairs, and getting water out of the hydrant barrels to prevent freezing. YCUA will also flush or run each fire hydrant to insure that it will operate properly during an emergency. As part of this process, each hydrant is tagged with a ribbon to indicate that the winterization has been completed and, to make sure there is no confusion as to whether they were done, the color of the ribbon changes each year. This year, the color pink was chosen.

Area residents should be advised that, as crews flush hydrants, there may be some discoloration of the water. If you experience rust-colored water, simply run the cold water tap for a few minutes to let the water clear. Please keep in mind not to wash any light colored clothing until the water is running clear. The rust coloring is caused by a natural build up of minerals in the water system. Some natural mineral deposits are stirred up in the water pipes when fire hydrants are first turned on.

The fire hydrant inspection program helps insure that all our fire hydrants are ready in the event of an emergency. If you have any questions, please contact YCUA Director of Service Operations Bob Fry at 484-4600 ext. 307.

YCUA Offers Educational Tours

YCUA offers guided tours of its wastewater treatment plant located at 2777 State Road in the Township of Ypsilanti. Tours of the plant can be arranged by completing a tour request form, which is available on our website. Tour participants must be at least 10 years old or in the 5th grade. YCUA requires chaperones at a 1:8 ratio for school grades 5 through 8 and 1:15 ratio for school grades 9 through 12. Please contact Luther Blackburn at 734-484-4600 ext. 121 or lblackburn@ycua.org for questions regarding tour guidelines and availability.

Did You Know?

For interesting and helpful information about bottled water, fluoridation, water conservation, home water filters, and other topics, you can visit the American Water Works Association (AWWA) DrinkTap website at www.drinktap.org.

Safety Is a Top Priority at YCUA

YCUA continues to show statistical results from its overall efforts to provide a safe working environment for its employees. The entire YCUA workforce has worked diligently over the years to develop programs, policies, and procedures that support the Authority's mission statement "Dedicated to Providing Top Quality, Cost Effective, and Environmentally Safe Water and Wastewater Service to Our Customers" without compromising safety.

A recent meeting with the Authority's loss control consultant from the Michigan Municipal League (MML) showed significant downward trends over a five-year period in both workers' compensation claims and property liability claims, a trend that YCUA strives to continue in its everyday actions.

The Authority's on-the-job injury claims continue to remain very low year after year. "This reflects directly upon the increased efforts of the workforce to both think and work safely each and every day. These efforts, in turn, result in reduced insurance premium rates charged to YCUA," states Scott Robinson, the Authority's health and safety supervisor. YCUA is currently performing at a rate equal to 34% better than the norm in similar organizations and job environments. The most common areas of injury claims across similar organizations and over the years at YCUA are slips / trips / falls and strains / sprains related to materials handling. The Authority continues to operate proactively in all areas of safety through employee training and raised situational awareness. All employees are involved, which results in a decreased number of incidents of this type.



Excavation preparation using a trench box

YCUA's liability and property pool loss ratio also continues to remain low year after year and outperforms that of similar organizations. Again, this is a reflection of the efforts of the Authority's workforce. Their work practices reflect superb safety practices and strategic preventative maintenance, which help to significantly reduce the property claims that YCUA can control.

At the conclusion of the meeting with the Authority's loss control consultant, he continued to be impressed with the measures utilized at YCUA and enthusiastic about the efforts put forth by the workforce to maintain safety and reduce claims. These efforts include:

- ◆ Active Safety Committee members in each department providing a positive presence.
- ◆ Knowledgeable staff who recently reviewed proactive maintenance activities to address and prevent a future near miss incident.
- ◆ Use of preventative measures such as excavation checklists and photo documentation to police YCUA's activities and those of the other utilities involved.
- ◆ Preventative measures taken by consulting a professional to review ergonomic issues to reduce potential claims in the future.
- ◆ Employee training provided to address safety issues related to the many types of work practices performed at YCUA.
- ◆ Bulletins and other precautionary health information (extreme weather, etc.) shared in the departments to forewarn and prepare employees who work in the elements.

2014-2015 YCUA Water Supply and Wastewater System Improvements

Improvements will soon be made to the grit handling system at the Authority's wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) headworks, which will provide greater operational flexibility and reliability. The various components include degritting mechanisms in the grit tanks, grit pumps, cyclone separators, grit classifiers, grit conveyors, piping, and appurtenances. Also included are repairs to concrete surfaces in the grit effluent channel such as the removal of deteriorated, unsound and spalled concrete, patching, and application of special coatings. The repairs to the concrete are necessary to restore the structural integrity of the channel and maintain an uninterrupted operation of the grit collection system of the WWTP. The total project cost is estimated at \$1,985,000.

Improvements are also forthcoming to the heating and ventilation systems at the Big Four pump stations located at Factory Street in the City of Ypsilanti and Willow Run, Martz Road, and Snow Road in Ypsilanti Township. The primary components of the heating and ventilating systems at these pump stations are air handlers, unit heaters, an exhaust fan, a boiler, and related piping. Almost all of the heating and ventilation equipment systems components are original equipment that has been in operation since the pump stations were completed during 1982. More energy-efficient options are now available to replace the existing components, which have exceeded their collective design life. The total project cost is estimated at \$2,470,000.

Both projects will be funded through the State Revolving Fund (SRF) loan program administered by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ).

It's Time To Winterize!

The time to prepare your home for winter is before the freezing temperatures and snow arrive. Follow these tips to help prevent frozen pipes in your home:

1. Disconnect outdoor hoses and make sure hose bibs are not dripping.
2. Insulate pipes in unheated areas or seal off unheated areas.
3. Find your water meter shutoff so if a break does occur, you can turn off your water service quickly.
4. If you have an in-ground sprinkler system, contact your dealer about scheduling an appointment to have your system thoroughly winterized.
5. If your home's water will be turned off for winter, there should be heat to protect the meter as well as the plumbing.
6. YCUA recommends that customers winterize their homes just in case there is a complete power outage.