

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Utility Wins Esteemed Platinum, Gold AMSA Awards

The Association of Metropolitan Sewer Agencies (AMSA) recently honored Cox Creek and Maryland City Water Reclamation Facilities with the prestigious Platinum Award. AMSA awards recognize major wastewater treatment plants for their anti-pollution efforts demonstrated by compliance with their national pollutant discharge permits. The Platinum Award honors member facilities that have achieved 100% compliance with their national pollutant discharge permits (NDPES) for five consecutive years. This is the second consecutive platinum award for these two facilities - the equivalent of ten consecutive years without a single permit violation.

Representatives of Utility Operations attended the

awards luncheon in May in Washington, D.C. to accept the awards.

Gold Awards for 2002 were awarded to Annapolis WRF, Patuxent WRF, Broadneck WRF and Broadwater WRF. Gold Awards recognize plants that have achieved 100% compliance with their national pollutant discharge permit for an entire calendar year. Mayo WRF also had a perfect year of compliance, but because the plant has less than a 2.0 MGD capacity, it is not eligible for the AMSA awards program.

Anne Arundel County is routinely among the nation's top AMSA award winners described by AMSA as "truly among an elite group of honorees."

Don't get caught singing the ... "Poly Blue Blues"



Polybutylene, also known in the plumbing trade as "Poly Blue" and "Big Blue" is a form of plastic resin used extensively in the manufacture of water supply piping in the late 70's to mid-90's. Commonly used in the mid-Atlantic states to replace traditional copper piping, polybutylene piping was considered at the time as "the future of plumbing". Unfortunately, it was later discovered to have a high rate of failure and became the subject of a major class action law suit that compensated many property owners who suffered losses due to pipe failure.

Polybutylene piping systems are used for on-property underground water mains and in interior water distribution systems. To find out if you have poly blue, have your plumber check where the pipe enters your home through a basement wall (often near your hot water heater), floor or crawlspace. Your main water valve should be connected to the end of the entering water main. Poly blue water mains are usually 1/2" to 1" and are blue, gray or black and should not be confused with polyethylene pipe.

Unless a property owner notices a wet spot or sink hole in the area of their water line, it is very difficult to detect an underground leak. Underground leaks are detected by the county when a meter reading is processed by the Billing Office and it is determined that the

consumption is out of line with the customer's normal usage to a degree that it is not explainable by normal seasonal fluctuation. If this occurs, the Billing Office will send a meter reader to re-read the meter to be sure it was read correctly and will notify the property owner by letter if a plumbing problem is suspected. Should you receive such a letter, you should have a plumber check your on-property plumbing for leaks as soon as possible. Underground leaks can lead to enormous losses of water and extremely high utility bills.

Meter readers most often cannot determine leaks from initial readings. With the use of automated equipment, readers no longer actually read the numbers off the meter manually. The meter reader does not have a means of comparison to check if the consumption is out of line with past consumption levels. A reader must be sent back to reread the meter manually to check for an incorrect reading or to check for an unexplained "flow" or constant turning of the meter dials indicating a leak. If the meter reader suspects a leak, a door hanger will be left on the property notifying the customer.

The failure of polybutylene pipe is infamous in the plumbing business. Throughout the 1980's numerous lawsuits were filed for millions of dollars in damages. Although the manufacturer never admitted that poly is defective, they did fund a class action settlement for damages. If you believe you qualify for a settlement, you may contact the Consumer Plumbing Recovery Center (CPRC), who is administering the nationwide class action settlement. CPRC can be contacted at 1-800-392-7591 or www.pbpipe.com.



First Rate Increase Since 1994 Approved

As part of the FY2004 budget, the first rate increase to county utility customers since 1994 was approved. Despite the very best efforts of an award winning management team recognized nationally for efficiency, operation and maintenance costs continue to increase yearly. The costs to build, operate and maintain the infrastructure needed to deliver clean, safe drinking water to customers and collect and treat wastewater in an environmentally sensitive manner, continue to rise. Many of these costs are not controllable by management. The fact that surrounding utilities have had a number of rate increases in the last decade and the county's utility has not had a rate increase since 1994 is a testament to the efficiency of a well run utility.

As operating costs continue to rise, an increase in rates is needed so costs do not exceed revenues. Some of the factors contributing to the need for rate increases include:

- Growing customer base - need for more infrastructure, manpower, etc. to service larger customer base
- Increase water demand - more customers means a greater demand for water, more infrastructure, higher operational and maintenance costs
- Increased costs of purchased services - water from Baltimore City and wastewater treatment from other jurisdictions
- Growing cost to dispose of sludge or "biosolids", a by-product of wastewater treatment
- Increasing power costs since the deregulation of electrical power distribution
- Unfunded mandates from federal and state government - security assessments and programs, enhanced biological nutrient removal, sanitary sewer overflow legislation, etc.

The Spring '03 Update described the EXCEL program which has helped the Bureau reduce costs while maintaining environmentally sound water and wastewater services. Some of the cost control strategies resulting from this program include:

- moving to a flatter, team oriented organization that has fewer layers of management and more flexible workers. This strategy has allowed the Utility to cut its work force by almost 7% resulting in a savings of over \$7.5 million dollars since 1999. The goal is to eventually reach a total reduction of nearly 15%.
- using technology as a strategy to cut costs while improving efficiency. SCADA operations allows for remote monitoring and control of facilities that once had to be physically manned 24 hours a day. Now these facilities are monitored remotely with periodic physical on-site visitation as needed.
- outsourcing non-core activities. Routine tasks such as lawn care, painting, etc. are outsourced rather than performed by highly trained utility workers.

Prior to July 1, 2003 the residential user rate was \$1.68 per 1,000 gallons, after July 1, 2003 - \$1.86. The former Environmental Protection Fee of 20% on wastewater is now split to 10% of water and 10% of wastewater charges. A user who consumes 20,000 gallons per quarter whose bill was \$109.17, will now have a bill of \$118.49, an increase of \$9.33 or 8.54%. For more information on the rate changes, visit www.aadpw.org.

Since Utility Operations is a public enterprise system operating within county government, it does not receive tax revenues and must be self supporting. Without the rate increase, the Utility's expenses would exceed its' revenues. Although cost increases are inevitable, Utility Operations will continue to seek every means possible to provide outstanding, award winning service to its customers while minimizing costs.

Helpful Telephone Numbers for The Department of Public Works

24-hour EMERGENCY service for water and wastewater; solid waste (after 3:30 p.m.) ...

	410-222-8400
South County...	410-451-4118

After 3:30 p.m., weekends and holiday EMERGENCY Service for stormdrains, roads, traffic lights/signs...

410-222-6120

For weekday EMERGENCIES (between 7:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.) involving stormdrains, roads, or traffic lights/signs, please call the appropriate district office. If you do not know what district to call, please call any of these Customer Relations numbers...

Customer Relations...	410-222-7582
General Information...	410-222-7500
Billing Information...	410-222-1144
Bulk Item Trash Service, Recycling Information, Trash Collection...	410-222-6100
Northern Roads District...	410-222-6120
Southern Roads District...	410-222-1933
Central Roads District...	
Crownsville Yard...	410-222-7940
Central Roads District...	
Odenton Yard...	410-222-6126

During snow emergencies (4" or more) customers in all roads districts please call...

410-222-4040

Anne Arundel County
Department of Public Works
2662 Riva Road
Annapolis, Md. 21401-7374

www.aadpw.org



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