

Water Shutoff Installations - 11-12 July 2011



Provision of adequate supervision!



The real heroes! (They got the job done in spite of all the supervision).



The (old) magic rig that made it all possible.



Getting ready to thread in one of the shutoffs.



Admiring a job well done!

A remarkable thing happened over the past two days here in the community. Two major construction projects on Lake Trail West required new shutoff connections to our water system and these connections were accomplished by a crew from Highlands Water without requiring that the water be shut down in the main!! How can this happen, you might well wonder?

Well, this reporter was on the case, camera in hand, to figure that out. One of the first things I noticed was the level of supervision by MKL individuals of various official standing (or not). Numerous supervisors, this reporter included, "helped" with comments and observations during the two-day operation. Seriously, the consistent and helpful oversight of Bill Manser (knowledgeable about the mains and their history, familiar with the layouts of the two locations, friendly and helpful to the people working on the project) really did help the project to a successful conclusion.

This all started when Highland Water was asked to do the shutoff installations. They have worked extensively with the Lakeshore Company in the past on our water system and were well aware of how concerned we, as a community, can be when the water must be shut down for a repair (apparently we are on the high end of the list for such level of concern in their experience). As a result, they looked far and wide for a way to do the installation without shutting the water off. Another water company with extensive experience with "older" cast iron systems such as ours said that they had done it before. They had the appropriate tool for Highland Water to borrow. There were only two little "issues". 1) The tool had not been used for (many) years, so had to be retrieved from the shelf, dusted off, and brought to the site; and 2) no one at Highland Water had ever used the tool before. One might think the 2) would pose a serious problem, but interestingly, the existence of a new way to do the job without service disruption seemed to excite the Highland Water team and probably led to more study and care on the job which probably contributed to their success.

On Monday, the team opened two trenches (one at each site) and uncovered a length of water main at each location to serve as the site for the shutoff installation. The real fun started on Tuesday. The jig – a complex brass contraption with chain bolts, gaskets, and flapper valves – was attached to the first site at about 9:30 AM. The jig makes possible three operations on a main at full pressure – 1) drilling a hole through the main wall; 2) tapping the hole with screw threads; and 3) installing the shutoff valve to the tapped hole. Because of a lack of familiarity with the tool and an abundance of caution, the first installation took about three hours. All of the energy for the drill-and-tap part of the process is provided by the individual in the trench, and it certainly did look pretty intense! The first installation went quite well with very little leakage and much learning about how the tool worked and what techniques made for the best results. The second installation took less time and was slightly more exciting, as a seal leaked quite a bit during that part of the job, soaking the Highland Water crew (but not the MKL supervisor(s)) and raising the excitement level of all. But the shutoff was successfully installed in about two hours.

The community owes a debt of thanks for the effective and careful work by the Highland Water crew that made for a successful installation of the two shutoff valves in our Lake Trail West water main without an interruption in service.