

Pipeline Express

Providing reliable, quality water and services at a reasonable cost.

Staff Conference Employees get together

The employee conference was held Feb. 26 at the El Rio Vista Recreation Center in Saint Paul



One of the teams in the team building activity learns how to use our system software to locate tanks and towers and determine how much water they hold.



General Manager Racquel Vaske welcomes staff to the employee conference at the El Rio Vista Recreation Center on Feb. 26.



Keynote speaker Jermaine Davis entertained and informed the audience with tips for both their professional and their personal lives.



Staff listen attentively during the keynote address at the employee conference.

More conference photos on page 4.

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Story ideas? Contact Jodi Wallin, 651-266-6308 or Jodi.Wallin@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Water hydrants, more than meets the eye

Stalwart defense against fires, key to water quality flushing in the system

By Jodi Wallin, Bob Meyer, and Graeme Chaple



A smart water hydrant, one of 10 in the system. Water hydrants, lone sentinels against the occasional fire, and means to scour the water system with flushing, are an essential part of the water supply system. The utility owns 9,712 hydrants, with another 822 hydrants on private property that are maintained by the landowners. Every single one of those 9,712 hydrants are inspected and tested each year by a small but dedicated staff of two consistent employees and one additional employee that is being trained on how to maintain our hydrants who rotates out. They do their work starting on April 1 and finishing before November 1 of each year. They work alone, doing static testing and listening to make sure the hydrant doesn't leak and performing maintenance and minor repairs as they travel their route of 35-40 hydrants a day. These tests and visits generate

another 200 work orders for more extensive repairs on the hydrants each year.

Most work orders stem from issues with the breakaway, which can leak due to rusty or stretched bolts at the base or leaky gaskets.

The oldest hydrants in the system were installed in 1884, only two years after the utility became city owned. Last year, we refurbished two of these Mathews hydrants and put them back into service in the Historic Hill District in Saint Paul. The newest hydrants were installed last

year, including 10 smart hydrants that can monitor water pressure and temperature and alert staff to inconsistencies in the system. They can also be used to verify SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) readings that show pressure changes. All 10 smart hydrants are located in the lowest pressure areas of the system near pump stations, tanks, towers, and reservoirs.

Replacements

We replace old water hydrants with the new ones as needed. In 2024, 70 hydrants were individually replaced. Another 35 were replaced as part of watermain replacement. The replacement process ensures the system remains reliable and up-to-date.

Flushing Program

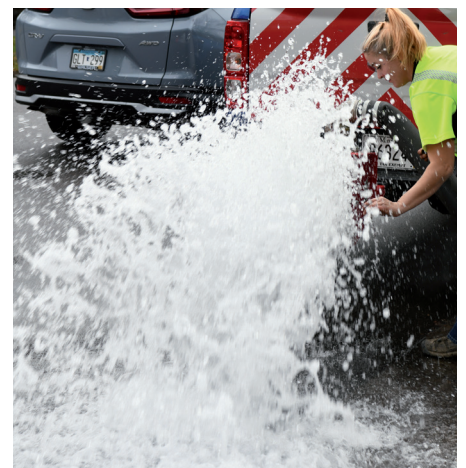
In addition to inspections of all the hydrants each year, many of the

hydrants are also flushed by crews that conduct Uni-Directional Flushing (UDF) for a variety of reasons. On average 1,300 hydrants are flushed each year as a part of our UDF program, which is a systematic flushing of 8" and smaller mains. By isolating sections of water mains and flushing in one direction, UDF removes sediment, debris, and stagnant water, enhancing water quality.

While the primary purpose of UDF is to "clean" the main, each hydrant along the UDF run is flushed as a part of the process, cleaning out the hydrant lead itself, ensuring optimal performance.

Commitment to Reliability

The utility's comprehensive inspection, replacement, and flushing programs ensure that hydrants remain reliable for both firefighting and maintaining water quality. Ongoing investments in smart hydrants and proactive maintenance support the long-term sustainability of the water system.



Flushing a hydrant.



Decoding the Alphabet Soup: Fun acronyms at SPRWS

By Justina Ross

Have you ever sat in a meeting at SPRWS (Saint Paul Regional Water Services) and felt like you were listening to a secret code language? You nod along, pretending you understand, but in reality, you're lost in a sea of acronyms. Don't worry—you're not alone!

Water utilities love their abbreviations, and SPRWS is no exception. To help you stay afloat (pun intended!), here are some of the most common—and sometimes entertaining—acronyms used in our world of water. H2OMG! What Do These Acronyms Mean?



SCADA – Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition This fancy term describes the system that monitors and controls water treatment and distribution. Think of it as the brain of our operations, making sure water flows where it should—safely and efficiently.



SDWA – Safe Drinking Water Act A U.S. law that ensures the quality of drinking water by setting standards for water treatment and regulating contaminants.



MGD – Million Gallons per Day This is how we measure the volume of water moving through our system. On an average day, SPRWS delivers 50+ MGD to customers—talk about staying hydrated!



AMI – Advanced Metering Infrastructure how much water you use! AMI lets meters send real-time water usage data, helping both the utility and customers monitor consumption and detect leaks.



PSI – Pounds per Square Inch A common unit of pressure measurement. If your shower suddenly feels weak, you might start wondering about the PSI in your water system!



AWWA – American Water Works Association The go-to organization for water professionals! AWWA provides research, education, and standards to help ensure safe drinking water across the country. If it's best practice in the industry, AWWA probably had a hand in it.



WOOC – Water Outage Operations Center When there's a water main break or an emergency, this is where the action happens! The WOOC coordinates response teams to ensure repairs are made quickly and customers stay informed.

Bonus: Acronyms We Wish Were Real

Not all acronyms are official, but here are a few fun ones we'd love to see:



H2LOL – Happy to Love Our Lakes Because clean water isn't just essential—it's something to celebrate!



DWWD – Don't Waste Water, Dude A gentle reminder to turn off that faucet while brushing your teeth!



WWDWWD – Why We Do What We Do Our mission: Providing safe, reliable water for everyone, every day!

So, next time you hear someone drop a mysterious acronym at SPRWS, you'll be ready to decode it like a pro. And if all else fails, just smile, nod, and say, “Oh yeah, I love that one!” 😊

JOB OPENING, TRANSFER, PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The water utility has an opening for a safety officer. The position is posted on stpaul.gov/jobs. Applications must be made online by March 10 at 11:59 p.m. The utility also has a transfer/reduction opportunity in meter operations for a meter technician. If you are interested in moving to this position, please contact Sandy Kimbrough in HR at Sandy.Kimbrough@ci.stpaul.mn.us.

or call 651-266-6510 or stop by her office by March 12. There is a promotional opportunity for a GIS specialist I in the engineering division that is open until March 12. Apply online at stpaul.gov/jobs and look under internal openings. You can also contact Becky Carlson at Becky.Carlson@ci.stpaul.mn.us at 651-266-6296 for more information.

COMP TIME TO BE CASHED OUT MARCH 31

Do you have more than 40 hours of compensatory time on the books? You have until March 31 to use the hours over 40 or the overage will be cashed out for you.

You can have up to 150 hours of comp time on the books at any given time. The reporting year ends on March 31 and you are only allowed to carry over 40 hours into the new reporting year. If you have any questions, you can always ask your supervisor.

Images from the conference



Volunteers illustrate the important of everyone giving 100% at the office.



Team building activities were popular, fun, and educational at the conference. Above left, staff determine how much water is our water tanks. Top right, employees play the price is right with typical distribution supplies.



One team finds out more about customer service.

GRANT ENGEN, RETIREE, PASSES AWAY

Grant Engen, Jr. was a long-term employee of the water utility



Grant Engen, Jr., retiree, passed away on January 26.

Grant started with the city in 1982 as an unskilled laborer and moved to a ditch digger role in 1984. He became a water serviceman II in 1986 and then a water service supervisor in 1989. He then took on roles such as heavy equipment operator, revolving power equipment operator, and revolving power shovel operator over the years before resigning from his position in 2000.

Our condolences go out to his family, friends and former co-workers.