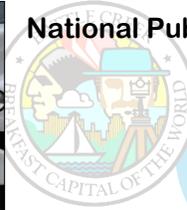


# Utilities: Water & Sewer



“It’s a crappy job, but someone’s got to do it.”

-Cathy DeGraw  
Sewer Division



National Public Works Week 2016—Always There

May 19, 2016

## Water, sewer crews keep pipes clear, water flowing

### SEWER

The way Lloyd DeWalt and Gary Anthony describe it, the Sewer Division crews are heroes one day and ... well, not, the next. It really depends on the clog.

This day, the two long-time city workers have an enormous, humming Vactor truck on Circle Drive, blowing debris out of a 12-inch sewer line with an immense amount of water pressure.

They men tell stories about the dangers of their work—that water nozzle can shoot back out the manhole—and saving animals. Lloyd rescued a cat stuck in an inlet near a local veterinary clinic, using low water pressure to ease the animal back.

The two tell another story about causing a geyser effect for a couple using the toilet and shower at a home near their work. The water pressure used to clean the pipes can cause an air vacuum, which can blow up local toilets and drains. While this is quite a shock in the moment, everyone tends to laugh about it afterward.

Across town, Cathy DeGraw, one of the few women in the city’s Public Works Department, is working through the “three-month list” of problem sewer lines. These get cleaning attention every three months to avoid problems.

Cathy started in Field Services—called Streets then—15 years ago, but loves her current job on the Vactor truck. It

can be a smelly job, and she and crew partner Richard Strobel tick off the strange things they’ve found cleaning sewer lines—a gun (handed over to the Police Department), a snake, jewelry, a tire and, most often, rags. Cathy shakes one from the water nozzle as she lifts it.

### WATER



A Water Division crew gets the treat of practicing something they don’t do often—a hydra-stop during a recent water valve replacement.

This meticulous task involves drilling into a water main and creating a block, pulling a stopper with vacuum pressure to block water instead of shutting it off. This is done occasionally for large businesses when water work is done nearby.

Crew members are replacing a valve ahead of road resurfacing work to come, something they work hard to accomplish, so as not to dig up new roads later on. They’ll also replace multiple valves in one go, to be less intrusive to residents, says Jeff Faulk, the foreman on this day’s crew.

Water crews also power wash water towers and paint fire hydrants. The latter is more time consuming than you might think; it took time to test paints to be sure it had the highest visibility and longevity.

### Always There

You probably don’t think twice about turning on your faucet and witnessing water gush out, or flushing away what’s in your toilet without incident.

Skilled men and women—who learn mostly through on-the-job experience, or with state water distribution licenses for Water crews—are out every day maintaining that underground infrastructure so your water flows and your sewer pipes clear. They operate large equipment and work in the dirt to ensure the city can provide these essential services.

Like many in Public Works, someone from these crews is always on standby, ready to take care of an emergency break or clog.

### Water & Sewer Facts

\$500,000	cost of a Vactor sewer truck
10,000-15,000	water valves
4,000	fire hydrants
400	feet of hose from Vactor truck to sewer
24	total Water staff
12	total Sewer staff