

Contact: Nick Hernandez  
Phone: (620) 441-4415  
Fax: (620) 441-0869  
[nhernandez@arkansascityks.gov](mailto:nhernandez@arkansascityks.gov)

City Manager's Office  
City of Arkansas City  
118 W. Central Ave.  
Arkansas City, KS 67005



# Press Release

## Environmental Services Division cuts water main breaks by half

*Water distribution, wastewater collection workers excited for new equipment*

ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (January 15, 2016) — Things are going very well on the water distribution side, part of the Public Works Department's Environmental Services Division, the City of Arkansas City's Safety Committee learned during its monthly meeting Jan. 7 in the city manager's office at City Hall.

The committee — which comprises several employee representatives of the City's police, fire-EMS and public works departments — meets on the first Thursday of each month to discuss injuries, offer safety suggestions, promote safe practices and help to reduce the City's worker's compensation rates.

In addition to gearing up for Phase 3 of the new water meter project, workers are striving to become more proactive in dealing with main breaks and valve maintenance, with the help of new equipment.

"The weird thing is, with all of these quakes, you'd think you'd get more shift breaks," said water distribution lead Anthony Butt.

"I don't know what the correlation is with pressure breaks. We still have them, but there are a lot of factors. We had a pretty even rain amount. But right now, it's looking like the soft starts (Public Works Director Eric Broce) had put in are working. We're down to about half of what we had in previous years."

Hernandez explained that the pumps at high-service pump station basically go from zero to full power, which "creates that water hammer in the lines. It cost \$6,000 (to install an electronic contactor on the pumps). That's like (the cost of) two main breaks," said Hernandez, who praised Broce and Environmental Services Superintendent Rod Philo for their engineering solution to the pressure problem.

Distribution workers are excited about having trucks that can handle a larger workload, as well. "We have the capacity on just our single trucks now to handle things we couldn't handle before," Butt said.

"Trucks now will be equipped with dual-feed hydraulics, so instead of having just one set of hydraulics, we have two sets. So we can run hydraulic saws or two hydraulic pumps — which we had to

**For immediate release**

*more*

do not too long ago. Actually, we had to use three hydraulic pumps at once to keep up with the water because there was a valve that was buried in the street.”

Butt said the workers also are excited about the new auto-cranes that recently were approved for purchase by the City Commission of Arkansas City.

“Instead of having to get their big boom truck out, they can just do it on their pickups,” Hernandez said. “That should save a lot of time, too.”

“Instead of sending the big truck out with two guys to go get a valve, we can just send one guy with a normal truck and keep more people on the job site,” Butt said.

Hernandez also mentioned that the recent purchase of a new valve exercising machine could save distribution workers hundreds of man-hours and improve the life span of the City’s largest water valves.

“It used to be a three- or four-man job, and now it’s one person out there,” Butt said. “This (machine) is computer-controlled — it runs a preset sequence, it runs the (global positioning system) as you’re doing it, it tracks the torque. You can preset the torque on it, and it’ll go up and it’ll go down.”

“Before, they had to do it by hand,” Hernandez observed. “One of those big 12-inch valves, it took 60 to 70 revolutions to turn it, depending on the model and the age.”

“Or you could get out the hydraulic valve exercising machine we had, but you had four people on it,” Butt said of the new machine’s unsafe predecessor. “It was such hard work that they just didn’t do it. You’d have half your crew out just exercising valves.”

Water distribution isn’t the only area improved by the increased application of utility funds to purchase new equipment and improve efficiency, either. The wastewater collection team also benefits.

“That thing’s pretty nice,” wastewater collector Brandon Vardy said of the division’s new vacuum truck. “Our old truck, we spent so much time just jacking around with it and trying to get something done. You pull up in this new truck and just do it, and then go on to the next thing.”

## **About the Safety Committee**

The City of Arkansas City’s Safety Committee meets monthly to discuss injuries, offer safety suggestions and help to reduce the City’s worker’s compensation modifier. Current members are:

- Anthony Butt — water distribution;
- Mike Frank — water treatment;

*more*

- Capt. Mark McCaslin, chair — police department;
- Justin Parks — fire-EMS department;
- Joe Prochaska — parks and facilities;
- Trence Robinson — sanitation;
- Curtis Tauscher — streets;
- Brandon Vardy — wastewater collection.

Staff advisors are City Manager Nick Hernandez, Human Resources Manager Marla McFarland, Administrative Assistant Katie McCubbin and Public Information Officer Andrew Lawson.