

EID at work—maintaining the water lines 24/7 all year long

It's early—around 5:00 a.m.—on a late-September morning in Cameron Park when a rusted saddle on an 8-inch water main buried 4 feet underground gives way, forcing a pressurized stream of water up through the pavement 30 feet into the air on Sudbury Road near Valerio Drive.

A call comes into El Dorado Irrigation District's after-hour service center. The dispatcher immediately phones EID construction/maintenance worker Clay Wicks, who is on standby at the time. Within minutes, Clay reaches the site and quickly assesses the situation.

He's not alone. A Sacramento television news reporter is there, having been alerted by the crew of the station's helicopter, which had been circling overhead about the time the line break occurred.

Clay contacts distribution operator Joel Beall to help shut off the water. In the short time he has before Joel arrives, and in accordance with district procedures, Clay calls water construction supervisor Matt Heape, who in turn alerts the district's director of operations, water division manager, and water operations supervisor, again in compliance with district procedures.

Clay and Joel know exactly what to do. And by 5:45 a.m.—less than half an hour after Clay arrived on the scene—the water is off and the cause of the break is known. It's also clear that the rusted saddle, which connects the 8-inch main line to a 2-inch individual residential service line, must be replaced. As additional workers arrive, they immediately begin the repair. The reporter tells his audience that the team works fast.

By a little after noon, the repair is complete, and state-required water samples have been taken. Service to about 23 households is restored with virtually no property damage from the line break.

“Quick response and well-trained employees are key in preventing frustrating, long-term outages when something like this happens,” Matt says. “And one thing I know for sure is that our crews are not strangers to hard work under difficult conditions.”

District employees who responded to the Sudbury Road line break, besides Clay and Joel, were Joe Young, Andy Ault, Patrick Preach, Ryan Rodriguez, and Auggie Flores. Phil Veerkamp joined Joel to assure the nearby pressure regulator station was not damaged by the line break, which occurred just “upstream” of the station.



Not every day in an EID construction/maintenance worker's life starts with a line break at 5:00 in the morning. But when you operate a 2,200-mile water pipeline system throughout a 220-square-mile service area, where the topography can vary every 50 feet or so in places, you're bound to see some situations like the line break on Sudbury Road. “We're committed to reliable service, and that means we don't want our customers to be inconvenienced any longer than absolutely necessary,” says water construction supervisor Matt Heape. “It's the same commitment, whether for planned maintenance or for unexpected incidents.”