

The Mainstream

A semiannual newsletter dedicated to enhancing water and wastewater services brought to you by
The Ypsilanti Community Utilities Authority



From The Director

As we enter the construction season in Michigan, we will continue our water main replacement projects. Although replacement of water mains does pose some short-term inconvenience, the payoff is great. The new material that we specify for new and replacement mains is ductile iron. Ductile iron mains, unlike the cast iron mains that are being replaced, have the ability to bend and deflect without breaking or splitting. So, when the ground shifts from our frequent freeze-thaw cycles in a Michigan winter or water pressure spikes suddenly, the mains absorb the stress and resist breaking. The ductile iron mains are expected to last fifty to one hundred years and give trouble-free service. We thank the public for their cooperation and patience as the projects proceed.

Larry R. Thomas, YCUA Director

Ypsilanti's Historic Stone Tower Gets Renovations

YCUA recently re-roofed the 150-foot-tall stone water tower in front of Eastern Michigan University's McKenny Union at the junction of West Cross Street and Washtenaw Avenue. Braving bitter winter cold, workers from Detroit Cornice and Slate Co. replaced thousands of wooden shingles on the roof of the 250,000-gallon tank.

The precise number of shingles needed to repair the roof was determined by Danielle Van Dusen, a Lincoln High School senior who is attending architectural design classes at Washtenaw Community College. YCUA Project Manager Rolland Sizemore also worked with area students to plan the new landscaping project that will take place this spring and summer.

The re-roofing of the Stone Tower was the first step in a series of repairs that are slated for completion by 2005. Those repairs include new paint for the steel exterior and cleaning and repairing of the stone façade. YCUA invested \$180,000 in the project, more than eight times the \$21,368 it cost to build the tower in 1890. This new roof is expected to last 50 years.



The Ypsilanti Stone Tower, which is owned and operated by YCUA, is an important city landmark, is featured more often in memorabilia than any other attraction in the city, and is listed on the State Register of Historic Places.

Did You Know ...

YCUA's replacement incinerator system will reduce total potential air emissions by 78%, and will actually improve local air quality. Other biosolids disposal options, such as landfilling or composting, would actually emit more particulates and carbon monoxide than the replacement incinerator system, due to the amount of truck traffic required to haul the product from the plant.

YCUA Receives Waste Knot Award

YCUA was recently honored as a recipient of the 2003 Waste Knot Award. The Waste Knot Awards Program, sponsored by Washtenaw County Planning and Environment Department, aims to recognize Washtenaw County businesses, schools, and non-profit organizations that make an effort to preserve and protect the environment by reducing, reusing, and recycling and to help local businesses improve their waste prevention and recycling programs.

Participation in Waste Knot's free, non-regulatory waste audits helps each business focus on particular target areas where improvements may be made. The Waste Knot Program has also helped to improve successful programs by recommending new paths for expansion. Currently, 85 Washtenaw County businesses have been recognized as Waste Knot Partners for their waste reduction and recycling efforts.

There is an increasing consumer demand for environmentally responsible companies in Washtenaw County. The Waste Knot Awards Program is designed to publicly recognize these organizations and their sound waste management practices.

YCUA's Summer 2003 Water Main

In an ongoing effort to enhance service to our customers and to provide preventative maintenance to our water distribution system, a number of water mains will be replaced or repaired this summer in cooperation with City of Ypsilanti and Charter Township of Ypsilanti road re-paving projects. Areas receiving water main improvements will be the Gerganoff, Clarksville, Martin Place, College Heights, and Normal Park neighborhoods as well as So. Harris Road between I-94 and Grove Road. YCUA staff appreciates your patience while these projects are under construction and expects the upgrades will result in marked improvements to the water service in those areas.

YCUA Employing Locally During Expansion/Improvements Project

The YCUA Wastewater Treatment Plant expansion/improvements project, which is in progress, will be employing a significant number of Washtenaw County trades workers. We are estimating that 70 - 100 skilled trades workers will be working on-site for the length of our project. The contractor, the Christman Company of Lansing, MI, has entered into a CUB Agreement with the Washtenaw County Skilled Building Trades Council, which is anticipated to last through 2005.

Electronic Bill Payment Now Available!

YCUA is pleased to announce that we are now able to offer the option of **free** electronic bill payment to our customers! Never miss another discount and save stamps, gas, and time! Your water bill can be paid automatically on the due date by an electronic debit of your checking or savings account*. YCUA will send your billing statement as usual on the last business day of the month; however, the payment will be deducted from your bank account on the 10th day of the month it is due.

Enrolling customers will need to allow 60 to 120 days for the electronic debit to go into effect. Customers can change or cancel their electronic payment enrollment at any time by notifying YCUA in writing. Enrollment forms can be obtained by visiting our office at 2777 State Road in Ypsilanti Township and can also be downloaded from our web site at www.ycua.org. For more information, please call YCUA Customer Service at 484.4600 ext. 106.

(*Please note: Some savings and money market accounts have a limit for electronic withdrawals. Please consider these limits and consult your financial institution for questions regarding your specific account.)

Get To Know Your Outdoor Water Meter

Planning an exterior home improvement project this summer? Be sure to familiarize yourself with your radio read device in order to avoid possibly damaging the unit. One type of outdoor radio read device is pictured here.



Please contact YCUA at 484.4600 if your construction project requires the removal and relocation of your outdoor reader or if

it is accidentally damaged.

YCUA Honors Former Director Eldon P. Ahles

The YCUA administrative building has been named in honor of its first director, Eldon P. Ahles. Ahles became the first director of YCUA in 1974. He worked to buy the land for the wastewater treatment plant on State Road in Ypsilanti Township, he oversaw the design and construction of the plant, and he established the YCUA administration. Mr. Ahles laid the foundation for the Authority, which now serves more than 25,000 customers in the Ypsilanti area. He retired from the Authority in 1989.

On January 28, 2003, the YCUA Board named its administration building after him. YCUA plans to enlarge the building as part of its \$110 million expansion/improvements project.



Current YCUA Director Larry R. Thomas stated: "We hope (this dedication) will inspire others to emulate the leadership, dedication, and commitment so ably demonstrated by Eldon Ahles. He inspired an excellent work ethic and pride for the Authority. His love and care for the employees of YCUA and the citizens of the Ypsilanti communities were always utmost in his mind and actions."

Eldon Ahles passed away on March 2, 2003 at age 76 after a brief battle with pancreatic cancer.

Detroit Raises Water Rates for Suburban Customers

In a public meeting on March 11, 2003, officials from Detroit Water and Sewerage (DWSD), the agency that sells water to YCUA, met with Ypsilanti City Council, the Ypsilanti Township Board of Trustees, and YCUA administrators in order to discuss DWSD's January 22, 2003 decision to raise rates for its wholesale suburban water customers, including the YCUA service area. Our water rates have been increased by 15.06 percent. This increase will go into effect in July of 2003.

The additional funds are needed to maintain and improve the Detroit water system, which is the source of water for all 25,000 YCUA customers in Ypsilanti, Ypsilanti Township, and Pittsfield Township. DWSD officials stated that these improvements are needed in order to comply with federal and state regulations. However, the Detroit officials also explained that the rate increase for Ypsilanti area was higher than some suburban communities due to particularly high usage during summer droughts.

YCUA customers can help keep future Detroit water rate increases at a minimum by doing what they can to save water during the hot and dry summer months. See the "Did You Know ..." feature below for summer water conservation ideas.

Did You Know ...

Outdoor watering restrictions and bans are sometimes imposed by YCUA during periods of high demand, particularly in the hot, dry months of summer. However, there are ways that homeowners can help minimize the need for watering restrictions while maintaining a beautiful lawn and garden. These ideas can also help to save you time and money!

1. Choose the right seed mix for your Michigan lawn. It should contain Kentucky bluegrass, fescues, and perennial rye grass.
2. Make your grassy lawn as small as possible by landscaping with native shrubs, plants, and flowers, which require less watering.
3. Keep your grass at least three inches high. This promotes healthier roots that better tolerate hot and dry conditions.
4. Don't water according to a strict schedule; water only when the grass or plants show signs of needing it. During cool, cloudy, or rain periods, you do not have to water as often.
5. Heat and wind will rob your lawn of water before it can be used. To avoid this excess evaporation, it is best to water during the coolest part of the day, usually early morning.
6. Water applied quickly or heavily tends to run off the surface whereas a light, slow shower will sink into the turf and maximize the benefits of your sprinkler.
7. To further conserve water, avoid sprinkling onto pavement.

Be sure to check our web site at www.ycua.org often during the summer months for up-to-the-minute outdoor watering restriction information.

