City Administrators Report

March 3, 2014

Frozen Pipes

Although we have not had a lot of snow to speak of, this winter did present other problems: frozen water services. Without a good layer of snow to protect the ground, the cold temperatures we experienced during January and February caused the ground to freeze.

We received numerous calls from customers with frozen water pipes, which were mostly service lines in their yards, in the streets, or piping under their homes. We did have one issue of a line freezing all the way to the main, trough a newly installed meter pit. The homeowner was away for the weekend and they returned to find their water frozen.

We tried several trial and error methods to thaw the line, but were unsuccessful. On Friday, February 21, Terry Oedewaldt dug up the service line. Once he dug down to the line, he found that it was actually broken. A new service line was put in and hooked up to the meter pit.

Once the weather starts to warm up outside, most folks think that things will be okay, but the frost will keep moving down in the ground. The small ponds in yards around town is a good indication of how frozen the ground is.

Safety Meeting

With the New Year starting, we are going to begin having regular safety meetings with the crews. With all the projects that we have been working on, it has been difficult to schedule safety meetings. Also, we will be having monthly supervisors’ meetings again.

First aid classes will be scheduled this spring to get the crews up to date with their cards. This is another difficult class for everyone to attend, as there is always something coming up that needs attention right away. The plan is to set up 3 classes so the employees will be able to attend at least one of the sessions.

Breakup

On Wednesday, February 26, we sent two dump trucks to Missoula to pickup more UPM winter mix from Knife River. The breakup in the streets this year is going to be extremely bad due to the cold temperatures. The frost is already causing some very large heaves in the streets, along with large pot holes.

We were patching earlier in January, but the material has been beaten out of all the holes that were patched. Last week we were down to about 6 tons of UPM and this will not get us through the rest of the winter. Hopefully, the two loads will get us through until warmer weather begins and we can look at getting cold mix for patching.

Departments

John Weikel from Montana Rural Water will be here to go over some of the priorities that were laid out in the Consent Order prepared for DEQ. The Consent order was approved by DEQ last week. One of the major issues is the day-to-day and weekly maintenance of the plant. John helped the operators put together a manual for the operators to use.

Street crews patching pot holes have been an endless task this year. As I mentioned before, the winter mix (UPM) is low and we had to get more. The cold temperature causes the mix to become brittle. Then it warms up and melts causing moisture to seep into the holes, and the traffic then forces the material out.

Our new office employee started last Thursday. Her name is Laura Parker and she has a lot of experience in finances, as she has worked for many years in the banking business. Laura will be a great asset to City Hall and we want to welcome her to the city.

Jim Hammons