



Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission

River Road Forensic Analysis FAQs May 20, 2009

Q. What caused the 66-inch water main on River Road to break?

A. The company that WSSC hired to do a forensic investigation into the break (Lewis Engineering & Consulting) has determined that the contractor did not properly install the 66-inch pipe in 1965.

Q. What is WSSC doing today to make sure PCCP pipes are properly installed?

A. We have increased the amount of miles of pipe that are inspected. Techniques used to inspect pipe have vastly improved and with new technology we are better able to spot exterior as well as interior problems with large water mains such as the 66-inch on River Road.

Q. Does WSSC inspect all large water mains?

A. It costs about \$100,000 to inspect a mile of large water main. Between FY01 and FY06, about four miles of PCCP pipe was inspected. In FY07, after a small rate increase, WSSC inspected 10.5 miles of pipe, and it did 8.2 miles last year. In FY'09, we are inspecting 10.8 miles of PCCP pipe that is 36-inches and larger and installing acoustic monitoring. In FY10, \$3.5 million is budgeted for inspection and monitoring PCCP pipes.

Q. How many large water mains (36" and larger) does WSSC have?

A. There are about 150 miles of PCCP 36" and larger of which 55 miles are 54" and larger.

Q. Is this a safety issue?

A. Routine internal PCCP inspections are a best practice used to reduce the risk of failure by identifying any pipe sections requiring repair and to provide condition assessment for long term capital planning in an effort to ensure a safe and reliable water supply. Seventeen miles of PCCP have been equipped with acoustic fiber optic cables which help detect breaks in the wires inside of PCCP pipes. Acoustic cables are being installed in 10.8 more miles of PCCP in FY09.

Q. Will WSSC dig up the other pipes to see if they are properly installed?

A. It's not financially feasible.

Q. Were the new sections of the 66-inch pipe properly embedded when they were installed?

A. Yes. The installation of the new pipe was inspected by WSSC and found to exceed our current standards.

Q. Who originally installed the River Rd 66" pipe and did that contractor install other sections of pipe?

A. We are searching our records for the name of the contractor. These documents pre-date our computer records and have to be pulled from a storage facility.

Q. What is WSSC doing to ensure that only reliable contractors do work for WSSC?

A. WSSC approved a new contractor performance evaluation process that went into effect in March 2009. These evaluations will document the contractor's knowledge of work, quality of work, compliance with standards and requirements, timeliness and effectiveness of management. The evaluations will be an important resource when determining responsibility of a contractor for future contracting opportunities. The performance of the Prime Contractor will be evaluated per Standard Procedure ENG-09-01, which is available on the WSSC Centralized Bidder Registration (CBR) System website at www.cbr-wssc.com and the WSSC website at www.wsscwater.com. If the contract duration is 60 days or more, the Prime Contractor will be evaluated for performance at the midpoint of the contract and at contract completion. **An overall final evaluation rating of unsatisfactory will result in a one year suspension from bidding on WSSC contracts.**