

Busy morning for city water crews

By Karla Pomeroy Laramie Boomerang Staff Writer

The month of November started with a bang for the water department in Laramie with three water line breaks in a four-block area.

According to crew leader Fred Nuss, handling two breaks at the corner of 13th and Steele, the initial break, where water burst through an old and deteriorating line was discovered about 6 p.m. Wednesday night. Residents were notified that the water would be shut off and water was shut off at about 6:30 p.m. Nuss said it is too dangerous for crews to work at night, so work began at about 7:30 a.m. Thursday morning, and the valve at the corner then “blew up.” About an hour or so later, a resident came by to say there was another leak, this one in the alley between Ord and Spring Creek near 15th Street. There was no chance to notify residents as water was already coming close to flooding garages so water was shut off immediately.

Due to the nature of the three breaks and the configuration of the water lines, Nuss said water was shut off from 13th to 15th and from Steele to Spring Creek.

Laramie Utilities Administrative Supervisor Cal Van Zee said there were nine breaks in October, and there have been 43 breaks since the fiscal year began July 1. He said the number is above the average that the city usually handles. Nuss said the city repaired 125 breaks in the fiscal year.

“The system is getting old, and we haven’t had a replacement program in place long enough to start making an impact,” Van Zee said.

Van Zee said when there is a break, the crews can repair it three ways depending on the type of break. They can repair breaks by putting a clamp over the break, replacing a section of pipe or replacing the valve.

Because of the condition of the pipe at the first break at 13th and Steele, Nuss said, the standard 12.5 inch clamp will be replaced with a 30-inch clamp. Once the repair is complete, crews will blow out the line by opening up a fire hydrant to remove air and dirty water. The water is then turned on for residents. He said a minor repair, like the first one they started working on Thursday morning, can take anywhere from two to eight hours to complete.

There are three types of breaks that the city deals with: a blow out; a beam breaks where the frost snaps the pipe and in the spring, the ground snaps it back up; and a split.



ANDY CARPENEAN/Boomerang photographer
Dennis Skinner, a city of Laramie water maintenance worker, uses a hose for a sump pump to drain the water from the hole where a water main broke at 13th and Steele Thursday. The break was one of three water main breaks in that area of town.