



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Significant Sewer and Water Upgrades Lead to Sharp Drop in Breaks and Spills

CITY RECORDS FEWEST WATER MAIN BREAKS IN 15 YEARS AND NEARLY 25% DECREASE IN SEWER SPILLS FOLLOWING RAMPED-UP MAINTENANCE AND REPLACEMENT EFFORTS

SAN DIEGO – Following significant upgrades to critical water and sewer projects after decades of neglect by past leaders, the City of San Diego recorded the fewest water main breaks in 15 years and saw a significant decrease in sewer spills during the 2019 calendar year.

“We’ve focused on replacing our old cast iron water mains and sewer lines to improve neighborhood infrastructure and better protect our environment,” said Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer. “This has led to a significant decline in the frequency of spills and flooding, and that’s good news for our neighborhoods.”

A total of 38 water main breaks were reported in 2019, a 38% reduction from the previous year. It’s also the lowest total in 15 years and far less than the peak of 131 breaks in 2010.

Sewer spills dropped significantly to 38 incidents in 2019, compared to 50 a year earlier and an all-time high of 365 spills in 2000.

The City’s continuing efforts to replace old cast iron water mains and replace or reline sewer mains have played a major part in the decrease in breaks and spills. Since 2013, the City has replaced approximately 220 miles of water mains across the city. The remaining 60 miles of cast iron mains are scheduled over the next few years with the goal of eliminating all cast iron by 2024.

Between July 1, 2016, and June 30, 2019, a total of 174.9 miles of sewer mains were replaced or relined. An additional 200 miles are scheduled to be replaced or relined over the next five years.

New water and sewer mains are made of polyvinyl chloride (PVC), a material expected to last much longer than pipe materials used in the past.

Another reason for a decline in water main breaks and sewer spills is improved preventative maintenance work by the City's Public Utilities Department. Crews routinely inspect pipelines, valves, pumps and other portions of the water and wastewater systems to make sure everything is in good working order.

To prevent sewer overflows, the City also will begin using two innovative tools this year. ECHO monitoring devices will be placed near sewer mains considered high risk for spills to detect early warning signs of preventable blockages, root intrusion, silt/sediment and debris within the collection system. In addition, high tech drones will be used to conduct visual flyovers of environmentally sensitive areas and challenging terrain after significant rainstorms. The drones will be used to identify potential problems for maintenance crews to resolve.

“New pipelines, monitoring tools and the vigilance of our Public Utilities crews are making a huge difference for our City,” said Shauna Lorance, Director of the Public Utilities Department. “We will continue to work toward further reducing infrastructure problems in the future.”

To report a water leak or sewer spill, call the Public Utilities' emergency number at 619-515-3525.

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