

February 2011

The Hartselle



Connection

Serving Hartselle's People, Building for Hartselle's Future

Community-Wide Cooperation Keeps Water Flowing

At approximately 8 a.m. Monday, Jan. 3, Hartselle Utilities Water System Operator Steve Terry got the one call he never wanted to receive: Decatur Utilities – the sole source for Hartselle's water – had turned off their water pumps.

A day earlier, DU water plant operators discovered that water from their plant that had been treated was still cloudy and dirty-looking, referred to as turbidity. "DU pulls its water from the Tennessee River just below Flint Creek. There was more sediment and debris than usual, stirred up by a weekend of heavy rainfall," Terry explained. "In addition, temperatures over the weekend were much colder than normal. DU was using a new treatment chemical, and from what we understand, it wasn't as effective at low temperatures."

At first, DU didn't have a timeline for how long their pumps would be off, Terry explained. Estimating that they had a total of 32 hours of water supply stored in five water tanks, Hartselle Utilities staff immediately began making phone calls to the media, the hospital and local schools, which were still closed for winter break.

The City of Falkville, which gets its water from Hartselle, temporarily switched to the West Morgan Water Authority. Hartselle City Schools agreed to extend the school holiday through Tuesday, January 4, as did Bethel Baptist School.

"We owe a huge thank you to school supt. Dr. Reed and Falkville Mayor Jimmie Walker," said HU General Manager Ferrell Vest. "Their gracious cooperation – as well as efforts by all of the people in Hartselle – allowed us to keep operations going."

Due to the voluntary curtailments, Terry said, what was initially projected to be about an eight-hour supply of water stretched to 12 hours. And although the north side of town experienced low water pressure, none of the system lost water.

"We emptied the Hartselle Mountain tank, and were down to about half the water in the four remaining tanks," reported Vest.

DU plant operators were able to turn the water pumps back on Tuesday morning.

This is the first time, in the 30 years Terry has been with HU, that the system has lost water. "But, we have an emergency response plan for curtailments, which we followed," he said, "and everything went as well as it could have."

All along, DU told the public and HU staff that the water was safe to drink, Terry said. Once the water from Decatur was turned back on, he said, HU ran their own tests before filling Hartselle's water tanks. "The water was always safe to drink," he assured.

Continued on back

Hartselle Records Third Highest Snowfall With Zero Weather-Related Outages

On Jan. 9, between eight and nine inches of snow fell in Hartselle – the area's third largest snowfall in recorded history. In anticipation of weather-related problems, several members of Hartselle Utilities' staff were at work, even though most of Hartselle's residents remained in their homes, snowbound. Fears of a repeat of widespread power outages that happened during the last major snowstorm in 1993 were unfounded, however: despite snow

and ice that closed City schools for three straight days, there were no weather-related outages on Hartselle Utilities' system.

According to Electric Superintendent Jonathan Hampton, over the last three years Hartselle Utilities has implemented an ongoing line maintenance program. "We divided the system into quarters," he explained, "and we clear the lines on one section each year."

Crews comb each section of lines, clearing right-of-ways and trimming trees away from primary and service lines, creating ten feet of clearance on all primary lines, Hampton said.

Keeping the lines clear isn't the only way Hartselle Utilities is preventing weather-related outages, General Manager Ferrell Vest said.

"Over the last several years, we have reconducted the system, taking old copper lines out, replacing them with new power lines," Vest explained. "We have rebalanced loads across the grid as part of this process, preventing spikes in power usage that can cause outages. Balancing loads across the system helps keep it stable, especially during extreme weather."

"The bottom line is this," Vest said, "during the snowstorm, we were tested. And, the system stood the test."

Almost nine inches of snow blanketed the Hartselle Utilities building in early January.



Lynn Wood Replaces Billy Warden



Wood

HU Gas Foreman Lynn Wood replaced Billy Warden as Water, Sewer & Gas Superintendent for Construction in late 2010. Warden retired from HU in late January.

Wood began working at HU in 2001 as a temporary employee in the Gas Department. "I knew I wanted to stay here and move up in the company, and I told them that when I was hired," he explained. "So I took as many management training classes as I could, and learned as much as I could from Billy. I proved to him that I could do the work, and the cards fell at the right times for me to move up."

After working as a laborer, Wood was promoted to Installer in the Gas Department. He then became an Operator for one year before being promoted to Gas Foreman.

Originally from Hartselle, Wood is married with three grown sons, a stepdaughter and a stepson.

Wood's promotion prompted a series of other promotions within the Water, Sewer & Gas Construction Crew and Wastewater Treatment Plant. Cleeton Springer is the new Gas Foreman, replacing Wood; Johnny Robinson is now Valve Maintenance Leadman; and Sidney Mills is the new Equipment Operator. Slade Sparkman is the the new WWTP Operator; Alton Armistead is TV Inspection Operator; and Stephen Johnson is Line Cleaning Leadman. In addition, Jeremy Dorrance was hired as HU's newest Meter Reader.

Several HU employees were promoted to new positions recently in the Water, Sewer & Gas Construction Crew and the Wastewater Treatment Plant. From left: Lynn Wood, Jeremy Dorrance, Stephen Johnson, Slade Sparkman, Alton Armistead, Cleeton Springer, Johnny Robinson and Sidney Mills.



Operation Warm

Cold winter months are often hard on those with fixed incomes. Operation Warm provides assistance to the elderly, people with disabilities and families with a health crisis. The Community Action Partnership of North Alabama administers the Operation Warm Program; customers must meet eligibility criteria to receive assistance. HU accepts donations and forwards them to Community Action. Customers can make a one-time donation to Operation Warm, or choose to add a specific amount to their utility bill each month. To do so, complete the form below and return it to Hartselle Utilities. For information, call 773-3340 or email Terri Harris at tharris@hartselleutilities.org.

To support Operation Warm, complete this form and return to Hartselle Utilities

- Please add \$_____ to my monthly Hartselle Utilities (HU) bill. I understand that I have the right to stop this contribution at any time by giving HU written notice, and that the amount I have indicated will be added to my monthly bill until such notice is received.
- I'm already an Operation Warm partner. Please increase my monthly donation to \$_____.
- Please add a ONE-TIME donation of \$_____ to my bill. I understand that the amount I have indicated will be added to one of my monthly bills.

Name _____ Account Number _____
 Address _____ Phone Number _____
 Customer Signature _____

Operation Warm is administered by Community Action Partnership of North Alabama, Inc.
 All monies donated go directly to those in need.

Water, continued from front

Throughout the day Monday and into Tuesday, Customer Service Manager Terri Harris said there were numerous calls about the safety of Hartselle's water.

When a crisis such as this happens, Harris emphasized, Hartselle Utilities alerts local television stations and newspapers, and puts information on HU's website, hartselleutilities.org. "There were rampant rumors on Facebook and other places that our water supply wasn't safe to drink," she said. "We encourage Hartselle residents to turn to local media and our website for accurate information."

Cracker Barrel Opening on Schedule

As this newsletter went to press, Alabama's 29th Cracker Barrel Old Country Store® was on schedule to open January 31 in Hartselle. According to Jeff Johnson, Director of Development for the City of Hartselle, site work on the property included private construction by Cracker Barrel as well as underground utility, stormwater and roadway work for the remaining city-owned 15-acre site at the intersection of Hwy. 36 and I-65.

The new gas and sewer infrastructure has been connected to the utility tunnel beneath I-65, which was completed by HU and the City of Hartselle in 2008 to encourage and support commercial growth at this interchange. The new infrastructure and roadway were engineered and constructed to service as many as eight additional commercial lots for future businesses.

Local crews and staffs from HU, Joe Wheeler EMC, East Morgan Water Authority, AT&T and the City of Hartselle began work in August, said Johnson. All site preparation needed to be completed by Dec. 24 so that Cracker Barrel operations and human resources staffs could move into the building and begin hiring and training employees for the January grand opening.

Finishing the work on time required a great deal of coordination, Johnson explained. "Due to the tight construction and inspection deadlines, this could not have been accomplished without the collective efforts and unified cooperation by the City of Hartselle, Hartselle Utilities, East Morgan Water Authority, Joe Wheeler and AT&T," Johnson explained.

The 10,244 square foot restaurant began hiring January 3, and committed to hiring a minimum of 150 employees. Cracker Barrel is open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, and 6 a.m. through 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday.



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Hartselle Utilities