

# TIPS FROM THE TOWN



November, 2011

## Step-testing has unearthed big savings in water mitigation

Since 2008, the Town of High River's efforts to locate and repair leaks in its water infrastructure has resulted in remarkable improvements in water conservation and consumption levels.

"In 2008 when we really started the STEP program 46% of the town's treated water was unaccounted for," said Jason Craigie, treatment facilities supervisor. "This is approximately six to seven million litres of water that was being lost every day."

In the three years since the program was implemented, crews have found and repaired more than 59 leaks and the percentage of 'lost' water has continued to decrease to 36 percent in 2009 and 25 percent in 2010. "It shows that our hard work has paid off," said Craigie. "That adds up to about 2 508 000 litres of water every day that is no longer being lost through leaks."

The STEP program has been instrumental in helping locate the smaller, harder to find leaks, but there is still a lot of work to do to meet Alberta Environment's target of 10 percent water loss. Utilities staff plan to continue the leak detection and repair program for at least another year in order to reach the 10 percent target of unaccounted water loss. Once the target is met continued testing will be important to keep water loss under control.

Residents have also played an important role by following the water conservation bylaw and reducing the amount of water they use every day. "Protecting our water resources and decreasing our environmental footprint is a priority we should all share," said Dean Downey, manager of operational services.

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The recent GPS project, including the repair of main water shut off valves into residences and commercial establishments, is another measure that will mitigate water loss due to leaks and provide a valuable service to residents. "Using GPS technology, utility crews will now have the ability to locate these valves within a five millimetre accuracy," explained Craigie. "This means that when a leak occurs, we will be able to shut off the main valves much more quickly, decreasing the amount of water loss."

The next big project will be infiltration and inflow of ground water into the sanitary system. Leaks allow ground water to get into the system which increases the stress on the treatment

plant, increases electricity costs and wears out the equipment much more quickly. "Essentially it means that our waste water treatment plant is treating clean water," explained Craigie. This is one of the biggest problems in a flood situation when huge amounts of ground water gets into the system, overwhelming the treatment facilities.

In the next few months town crews will use a number of tools and resources in order to identify problematic areas within the wastewater collection system. Using video cameras through the pipes and smoke testing are two of the strategies that will help town staff locate areas that need to be repaired. With smoke testing, smoke bombs are dropped into the sewer system; smoke will escape wherever there is a leak and be visible on the surface.

"Ground water infiltration is a serious issue for the town," said Craigie. "especially in a high water event when it puts excessive stress on the whole wastewater system specifically the treatment facilities."

With the commitment shown by town residents to reduce their consumption and these proactive measures to maintain and repair the water system, the town is making huge strides in reach sustainable goals.

## New compactor improves service at recycling centre



A new cardboard compactor has been added to High River's recycle centre that will decrease costs and improve environmental practices for the community.

The compactor compresses all the cardboard brought to the centre into a tight bundle enabling the town to significantly

increase the amount of material that it can transport to the Calgary collection facility in each load. "We can now haul four to five times as much cardboard in each load as we used to," explained Joe Angevine, supervisor of waste and recycling services.

The new compactor also makes it easier

for residents to recycle their cardboard boxes as it is no longer necessary to break down the boxes before feeding them into the machine. "The compactor does the work for them," said Angevine.

Residents load the material into a hopper on the side of the compactor and, once filled, a staff member operates the compacting process. For safety purposes, residents cannot operate the machinery.

With the new compactor, less space is required for cardboard recycling bins, making space for the centre to add an electronics recycling bin, which should be in place shortly. "We ask residents for their patience and cooperation with our operators while they are compacting cardboard," said Angevine. "There will be times when residents may have to wait a few minutes while the operator packs the cardboard but this a very short delay."

## Sustainable initiatives from the Town of High River

One of the Town of High River's goals is to promote environmental awareness and sustainability principles. The idea of being "green" has been around long enough that most people see the value in recycling, composting, and trying to reduce the amount of energy they use. As a way to further reduce the town's impact on the environment, here are a few small initiatives the town has implemented that could make a big difference.

### Switching to FSC Certified Paper

The town has recently begun using FSC Certified paper for our printing needs. FSC stands for the Forest Stewardship Council which is an international organization that has developed strict guidelines that companies must follow in order to have their products certified. The FSC supports sustainably managed forests, the rights of local communities, and the protection of waterways and wildlife habitat.

### Shopping Sustainably

When shopping for promotional items the town looks for environmentally friendly products made from recycled materials in a sustainable manner. Some recent items are biodegradable pens made from cornstarch and jackets made from recycled polyester and organic cotton.

### Improving Garbage Collection

The introduction of the Automated Waste Collection carts has created a lot of efficiencies in the collection process. One final improvement residents can make is to place their cart next to a neighbour's. The town's garbage trucks are capable of dumping two carts at once (but no more than two). By placing two carts side-by-side it speeds up the process, lowers fuel emissions, and decreases wear on the trucks.

### Paperless Utility Billing

Save yourself a walk to the mailbox and some trees while you're at it by getting your utilities bill sent directly to your email inbox! To have your billing statement emailed to you please send an email to [corporateservices@highriver.ca](mailto:corporateservices@highriver.ca) or scan the QR code below:



**Scan this QR code with your mobile phone and submit your email address to have your utility bill delivered electronically.**