

IWVWD Press Release – October 18, 2010
Tom Mulvihill General Manager Column

The Water District is a BIG Operation

The Indian Wells Valley Water District is a medium-sized, public water retailer. Consisting of mainline pipe, storage tanks, wells, pumping plants, boosters, arsenic treatment plants and office headquarters worth millions of dollars, the District's physical assets are, for all intents and purposes, mostly out of sight because they are either underground or at sites on the outskirts of town. The District currently serves about 12,000 residential and commercial connections representing approximately 29,000 IWV residents.

I thought it might be interesting to give an overview of our extensive water works and facilities because everything the District owns and operates requires regular maintenance, updating, scheduled inspection and monitoring.

Over two hundred miles of pipeline have been laid throughout the Water District's approximately 38 square mile service area since it's incorporation in 1955. Note: Manhattan Island, New York has about the same amount of underground mainline but with a much denser customer population per square mile.

The District currently has 10 active wells with capacities ranging from 1,000 – 1,400 gallons per minute (gpm).

In order to ensure proper service pressure, the District's service area is divided into five zones designated A through E and organized by elevation. It should be noted that all the zones are connected and that water can be moved from area to area as needed.

Zone A is the largest, being directly served by seven District wells and includes most of Ridgecrest proper. Zone B encompasses Ridgecrest Heights. C Zone covers the area from Kendall to Jarvis and is bordered by Norma on the west. D Zone reaches from Skylark to Belle Vista and from Gateway to Summit; and the E Zone consists of the Cerro Coso Community College Campus.

It is common and prudent practice for water agencies to store water and the IWVWD is no exception. There are three main reasons for this: 1) In case of emergency, disrupted water service can usually be restarted in a timely manner. 2) Having adequate extra water on hand provides system equalization during a jump in demand. 3) In case of fire, stored water ensures optimum flow for firefighters. Currently, eleven storage tanks with capacities spanning 100,000 gallons to 5 million gallons are scattered at sites throughout the District, with at least one tank located in each zone.

Of course, the IWVWD's largest recent capital investment (about \$15 million) is being spent on two government mandated arsenic treatment plants. In January of 2006, the US Environmental Protection Agency lowered acceptable levels of arsenic in drinking water from 50 parts per

billion (ppb) to 10 ppb. When four District wells were found to be “out of compliance” with these newer and more stringent standards, the Water District researched, planned, requested bids for and is now in the process of building two facilities for arsenic removal. One plant, located at Felspar and Mahan, will treat water from two wells in the immediate vicinity. The other, situated near Sydnor and Primavera, will treat water from two additional wells located nearby. Each plant is designed with a capacity of 2,400 gpm.

As you can see, Water District operations and responsibilities are complex. Ensuring a safe, secure and clean water source for our customers is not an easy job – but it is one our crews take seriously and perform professionally.

If you would like to learn more about Water District operations and our conservation efforts to ensure water for generations to come, please call us at (760) 375-5086. We are here to serve you.