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Gallup swamped in water line repairs

Accidents happen.

That was the word April 18 from Gallup Water and Sanitation Director Dennis Romero about an accidental water line break at the intersection of 5th Street and Historic Highway 66.

Romero said the contractor working on the 5th Street line replacement project was preparing to tie into the new 16-inch line when the accident happened. There is water line construction activity as far south as Hill Avenue from Highway 66. The new break resulted in standing water and the re-routing of downtown traffic.

“While clearing up the excavated area to allow for more room to finish the tie-in, the contractor,

Adame Construction (Albuquerque), inadvertently hit (nicked) a 2-inch corporation, or service, saddle and stop connected to the older 16-inch line that is being replaced," Romero explained. "The contractor nicked it with a backhoe, causing the water leak."

As far as cost goes, Romero said since the saddle and stop are being abandoned, and a switch over was scheduled for this week, no cost will be incurred as the line its attached to won't be in service anyway.

Romero described the saddle as a fitting device that was attached to a 16-inch iron ductile main.

"The corporation, or service, can be used to facilitate a connection to a customer or for a drainage point in a line," Romero said. "It was really more of a piece of equipment hitting a smaller fitting on the line than a pipe rupture."

In terms of how long it will take to get things back to normal at 5th Street and 66, Romero said the piping from 66 up to Park Avenue was installed over the past few months, so the city should have the connection swapped over from the older line to the new line in due time.

There is no cost to fix the mishap, Romero said. Romero also said there have been no water leaks at the 5th Street and Highway 66 in recent memory. He said there have been some leaks in an older distribution line in a section of the Coal Avenue alley, between 5th and 6th streets, but nothing other than that.

"That's a smaller distribution line and the leaks were attributed to the age of the line," Romero said.

Unfortunately, the 5th Street corridor has become a hot bed for water line breaks as of late. A family temporarily went homeless due to a 20-foot geyser bursting at the intersection of 5th Street and Hill Avenue some month ago. The family's home was destroyed in the incident and a civil lawsuit is in the works.

A separate water line break at the intersection of Ford Drive and Aztec Avenue is nearing repair, That break shut off water at two hotels and a restaurant in the Ford Canyon vicinity. Romero said water line breaks are common everywhere, saying infrastructure everywhere is outmoded.

“This by no means is a Gallup thing,” he said. “These kinds of things happen, and are happening, in a lot of places around the country.”

Ron Addison, a Gallup transplant from Las Cruces who was taking his car to Gurley Motors Tuesday for repairs, said the city might have its hands full this summer with like repairs. Gurley is located near the 5th and 66 location.

“They got to do something about all the breaks,” Addison said. “There’s been a lot lately and right near downtown.”

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