



SPLASH ALERT

Lesson Learned — Fire Hydrant Maintenance

Time and time again we see the devastation caused by California wildfires, especially in urban and suburban regions. While the forces of nature are sometimes beyond human capacity to control, the ability of firefighters to protect lives and property is enhanced when the fire hydrants they have available to them work properly.

A lesson learned recently within the ACWA JPIA membership, highlighted the necessity to ensure that fire hydrants included in water distribution systems of JPIA members are inspected and adequately maintained. A synopsis follows:

When fighting a wildlands fire that destroyed many high-valued homes in an unincorporated area, firefighters were unable to use the area's fire hydrants because they had not been maintained and would not function. The hydrants had been installed by a district on the district's water line many years before, but because the area was unincorporated, the hydrant inspection and maintenance responsibilities had never been determined. The resulting liability loss incurred by the JPIA membership pool was in the hundreds of thousands of dollars and stemmed from the facts that:

1. The fire hydrants were attached to the district's water line.
2. The hydrant ownership and the maintenance responsibilities were never clearly delineated, therefore:
 - a. The district did not inspect and maintain the hydrants.
 - b. The district did not have an agreement with another entity that ensured that entity would inspect and maintain hydrants.

A survey will soon come from the JPIA requesting information on the status of member district fire hydrants. The purpose of this survey is to determine the level of preventive actions employed by the JPIA membership pool to avoid losses related to the functionality of fire hydrants.

JPIA members are asked to review their hydrant inspection and maintenance programs to ensure their adequacy. Members are highly encouraged to ensure that updated hydrant inspection and maintenance agreements exist with entities that either own or maintain fire hydrants on the member's water distribution system.

A question this "Lesson Learned" asks:

How confident are you that fire hydrants on your water systems will perform the way they were intended?