

# THE Mainstream

## From The Director

*Severe wet weather and water levels are something YCUA carefully monitors as they pose a very real risk to our infrastructure. The spring of 2019 was no exception. With rainfall near all-time record highs, there was no shortage of emergency erosion repairs. High intensity storm events and a rising Huron River created a very unique and potentially high risk situation that YCUA and other governmental agencies cooperated together on to save millions of dollars of infrastructure near Loonfeather Park along Grove Road.*

*A Charter Township of Ypsilanti employee discovered that there was a large settlement where the ground was sluffing into Ford Lake and the largest area of concern was undermining the traveled roadway. Within the problem area was a 12-inch water main that, if compromised, could have caused additional issues.*

*YCUA responded immediately by working with the Washtenaw County Road Commission to get additional valves installed to minimize shutdowns to residents and to isolate the affected water main so the area could be safely assessed by the WCRC and other parties that were involved.*

*As we approach another spring thaw and rainy season, YCUA wishes to reassure residents that we maintain regular surveillance over weather conditions and water levels to minimize the potential impacts of catastrophic weather on area homes and businesses.*

- Jeff Castro, YCUA Director

## YCUA's Valve Turning Exercise Program to Begin in June

Beginning in June, YCUA Service Center crews will be conducting a conventional valve turning exercise program to maintain the quality and longevity of all water system valves. Being able to operate these valves at a moment's notice is extremely important. In an emergency, sections of a distribution system may need to be shut down without delay.

Conventional water system valve turning consists of closing, then opening each valve in a specific neighborhood. During this process, you might experience discolored water and sediment for a short period of time. After valve exercising has been completed in your neighborhood, it may be necessary to purge your internal plumbing. Running several

cold taps at full force for a short period will usually flush out any discolored water in the home. If the water is not clear, wait one-half hour and repeat the process. Running water through an outdoor garden hose is also an effective way to flush out your service. It is also a good idea to remove and clean out

the screens on faucet aerators, which may have gathered particles during the valve exercising process.

If you experience continued abnormally low pressure and / or low flow volume throughout your house, please call the number

listed below. Valve exercising will normally take place between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. For more information, please go to: [www.ycua.org](http://www.ycua.org) or call 734-484-4600 ext. 307.



A YCUA employee conducting a valve turning exercise.

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YPSILANTI COMMUNITY UTILITIES AUTHORITY

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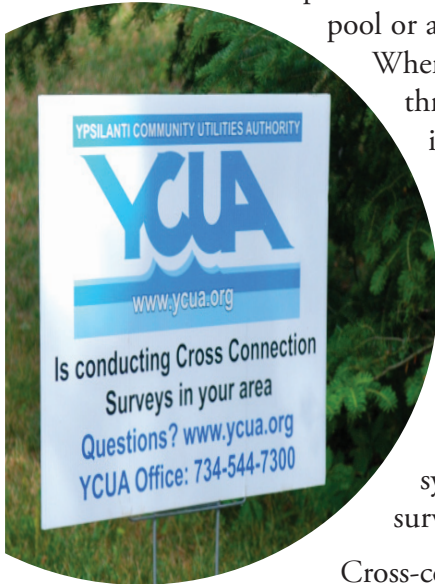
# YCUA to Begin Cross-Connection Control Program

This spring and summer, YCUA will be conducting residential cross-connection surveys. A cross-connection involves an arrangement of piping or appurtenances through which backflow of non-potable water could flow into the public drinking water. An example is the common garden hose submerged in a swimming pool or a bucket of detergent or other sources that would contaminate the water supply.

When the proper conditions occur, water can backflow into the drinking water through a cross-connection. The two ways that contaminated water can backflow into the drinking water are backsiphonage and backpressure.

As required under the Michigan Safe Drinking Water Act, 1976 PA 399 and the Michigan Plumbing Code, it is the responsibility of the water utility to implement a cross-connection program, the purpose of which is to help protect public health by preventing pollution and / or contamination of the drinking water delivered to a home or business.

Residential accounts in the YCUA service area will be surveyed by a Meter Service Technician and are done on external water spigots and irrigation systems only. A letter is sent only if there is a non-compliance issue. A follow up survey is made to ensure that non-compliance issues have been resolved.



*Photo by Kristina Scarcelli.*

Cross-connection surveys will take place between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. For more information, please go to: [www.ycua.org](http://www.ycua.org), click on Residential Users, and then click on Cross-Connection and Backflow Prevention. Or, call 734-484-4600 ext. 325.

## YCUA's Water and Wastewater Services During Power Outages

Power outages can be stressful and even dangerous. Dealing with the contents of your refrigerator or freezer and maintaining a charge on cell phones, tablets, and laptops can be challenging. Many residents depend on oxygen concentrators, CPAP machines, and other electric devices to provide life-saving medical treatments. In the summer, air conditioning stops functioning, which can cause heat stroke and dehydration in sensitive individuals, children, and pets. In the winter, furnaces stop working, which can cause severe discomfort and also put your water pipes at risk of freezing. It may be tempting at such times to rely on risky, alternative methods to heat homes. And then there are the effects that power outages can have on water and wastewater services.

The two main components of the YCUA system are the delivery of water to your taps and preventing sanitary sewage from backing up into homes and businesses. Both of these components rely on electrical services.

It is paramount to maintain pressure in our water distribution system to push water through the mains to residences, businesses, and the fire departments. For that, we utilize pumping stations with electric pumps. There are six water pumping stations and five water storage stations in the city and township. When the power goes down, our emergency standby generators at those stations run to ensure uninterrupted service.

Our sanitary sewage pumping and lift stations do the same when on emergency power, keeping the sewage flowing to the plant site and not into homes and businesses. The sanitary sewage stations consist of four main pumping stations and 35 smaller pump and lift stations.



*One of the portable generators in YCUA's fleet.*

YCUA monitors all power outages in our system and advises DTE on critical areas for priority restoration. Continually monitoring the generators for the duration of a power outage can make for long days and nights for staff YCUA members. However, community health and safety will always be our top priority.



## YCUA's Historical Stone Tower Gets a Birthday Upgrade

Ypsilanti's Stone Water Tower celebrates its 130th birthday this year. The tower was constructed in 1890 and has been in continuous service since that time. It stands 147 feet tall at the intersection of Cross and Summit streets, the highest point of elevation in the city. Its reservoir contains a steel tank with a 250,000-gallon capacity. The main purpose for the reservoir was to store a supply of water to feed cast iron mains constructed in 1885 and to generate electricity for city streetlights via the falling water. The elevation also provided sufficient gravity pressure to furnish water for fire emergencies.



*A 19th century image of the Stone Tower with a passing Ann Arbor - Ypsilanti railway street car.*

The Queen Anne-style tower was built as part of an extensive water works project and was designed by construction engineer William R. Coats, who considered purpose as well as overall appearance. Resting on a foundation of concrete mortar six inches deep, the substructure walls made of Joliet stone are 40 inches thick at the base and 24 inches thick at the top. Constructed on top of the walls were 10-inch steel I-beams spaced two feet apart and crossing the walls at right angles. The steel reservoir tank rests on the beams and walls of the substructure. Finally, there is a cupola with glazed windows.

The tower was constructed with local day labor at a cost of \$21,368. The workers constructed three stone crosses, one over the outside west door and two others inside the tower, to protect them from injury. In fact, there were no fatal accidents during construction.

To maintain the solidity and beauty of the tower, YCUA had the structure renovated in 1976 at the cost of \$114,694. This involved re-shingling the roof, replacing beams and barriers, repainting, and other general repairs. In 1987, YCUA reconstructed the entry doors. With each repair and renovation, YCUA has always attempted to maintain the original appearance of the tower.

YCUA is marking the historical water tower's 130th birthday by giving it a thorough updating while once again retaining its original design. Work on the steel tank begins this spring, most notably spot-welding to repair a small leak and other compromised locations on the tank, painting the exterior bottom, re-coating of the entire interior surface, and replacing the interior ladder.



*The Stone Tower today.  
Photo by Kristina Scarcelli.*

The Ypsilanti Water Tower features the adjacent bust of Demetrius Ypsilanti between American and Greek flags overlooking Washtenaw Avenue. The tower is not only a nationally-known landmark but also a symbol of the city of Ypsilanti, a point of community pride, and a valued part of local history and folklore.

**Spring is the time of plans and projects.**

*- Leo Tolstoy*

## April is Safe Digging Month

April is Safe Digging Month in Michigan. Each year, Michigan's underground utility infrastructure is jeopardized by unintentional damage caused by those who fail to call before they dig.

Save time and money by calling 811, the national Call Before You Dig toll-free number, or MISS DIG System, Inc., Michigan's one-call excavation safety and utility damage prevention company, at 800-482-7171 at least three business days in advance of any digging project. By making this call, residents can have underground lines located to avoid the potential for undesired consequences such as service interruption, damage to the environment, personal injury, and even death.

It is also important to practice safe digging by respecting the lines marked by the MISS DIG crews and maintaining visual definition of the line through the course of the excavation.

MISS DIG System Inc. offers free assistance with its more than 900 participating members who will stake underground utility lines and provide overhead electric line assistance prior to digging.



Need more information?

Please visit us at

[www.ycua.org](http://www.ycua.org)

or call

734-484-4600








## Did You Know?

YCUA's annual Consumer Confidence Drinking Water Quality Report will be mailed to you soon. After June 1, 2020, the new report will be viewable on our website at [www.ycua.org/waterreport.pdf](http://www.ycua.org/waterreport.pdf). Please call us at 734-484-4600 ext. 107 if you are unable to access the Internet and wish to continue having a paper copy of the report delivered to your home.



## Water-Wise Tips For Your Spring Cleanup

Storm drains in our streets and yards empty directly into our lakes and streams. Fertilizer on our driveways and sidewalks washes directly to our lakes and streams, polluting the water. Here are some simple lawn care tips for a great looking lawn that will also help protect our environment:

-  Don't pour your unwanted chemicals on the ground or down sinks. Instead, take them to a hazardous waste collection center.
-  It's important to use chemical fertilizers, weed killers, and fungicides only as directed. Do not apply these products if rain is expected or near surface waters.
-  Fertilizer left on sidewalks and driveways easily washes into storm drains. Sweep it back onto the lawn.
-  Don't hose your lawn clippings away - sweep them up instead.
-  Don't fertilize until three weeks after green up in the spring.
-  Consider a fertilizer spreader with a directional control that avoids non-lawn areas.
-  Instead of spreading weed killer over your entire lawn, use a pre-mixed spot treatment, directed at the root of the problem.