



THE CARN'S CHRONICLE

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Improving Jefferson County Sewers

On January 8, 2008 the Jefferson County Commission approved a resolution to appoint five members to the Environmental Services Department's Product Review Committee (PRC). Over the past 12 years, this committee has been instrumental in streamlining the vendor application process so the Jefferson County Environmental Services Department (ESD) would have a running list of proven, reliable products for use in any sewer construction or rehabilitation project that the County might need to undertake.



The "nickel-head" design is now standard for sanitary sewers in Jefferson County

The County formed the PRC in 1996 to assist ESD in specifying products and materials for rehabilitation of sewer pipes as the County entered into a federally mandated consent decree. The order required the County to make vast improvements to the sewer system. In response, vendors of sewer construction and repair products swamped ESD engineers and consultants seeking to have their products approved and used in the program.

The PRC process was new to the County. Prior to the consent decree, the County had never before undertaken so many projects on such a tight schedule. Therefore, it had never been

necessary to have a list of approved products. Each job was handled separately with its own set of specifications. ESD management, with assistance from local consultants, formed the PRC. A primary goal of the PRC was to aid the County in meeting the consent decrees schedule with literally hundreds of deadlines - which could only be done by streamlining the process.

The PRC originally consisted of nine members, all engineers or ESD operations staff deeply experienced in the field. The PRC organized a formal vendor application process, defined the process, and gave contractors a set of steps necessary in order to have their products approved for use by the County. The beneficial result of the process was County engineers would now have a set of products at their disposal they could use as they tackled some of the many rehab projects.



Installation of a new precast concrete manhole

The PRC has evaluated 196 product applications to date, has approved approximately 50% of the products. This process has helped to increase competition and improve the quality of County sewer projects. Important approvals include ten different cured-in-place pipe products (a sewer rehabilitation process), five precast concrete manhole vendors, seven ductile iron pipe

and fittings manufacturers, and seven PVC C-900 pipe manufacturers. The committee has also approved four manhole cover manufacturers utilizing the custom "nickel-head" pattern developed by the PRC. Before the PRC standardized manhole cover dimensions, various sizes and shapes of manhole covers were installed across the County and could not be interchanged if damaged or stolen.



Installation of competing CIPP liner

In 1999 the PRC assisted ESD in the development of standard specifications for sewer construction on private developments and for sewer service connections. Over the past 12 years the PRC has not only brought uniformity and consistency to the approval system, but has also created efficiency and predictability for those companies seeking to work with the County. With the consent decree mandated sewer rehabilitation work completed, the PRC's mission continues to assist in the evaluation of new product applications. The PRC works to ensure quality construction in Jefferson County's sewers so this consent decree will be the County's last. Commissioner Jim Carns shares that vision and will continue to support and improve the PRC.

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