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WATER MAIN REPAIR REQUIRES CREATIVE CUSTOM SOLUTION

CORE & MAIN CASE STUDY: Core & Main designed a custom solution to repair a broken water main in St. Louis, Missouri, returning city water distribution to normal flow.

Background

In May 2023, a busy stretch of Interstate 64 in St. Louis, Missouri, flooded after a water main broke. Some of the Friday rush hour travelers needed to be rescued by first responders. Initial cleanup took only a day, but repairing the pipe required months of effort. Bates Utility Company Inc., looked to its long-time partners at Core & Main for expert insight to come up with a creative solution to get the pipe back into service.

Drawing up a Custom Solution

When St. Louis City Water Division hired Bates Utility to repair the burst pipe, the contractor had a big project on its hands. They were dealing with steel-riveted pipe encased in reinforced concrete. It took two weeks to even remove the concrete and find the source of the problem.

Once Tim Bates, president of Bates Utility, knew what he was dealing with, he contacted Core & Main's outside sales representative Jon S.

Having done business together since 1984, Bates knew he could count on Core & Main to help him find a way to connect the 48-inch valve and 60-inch pipe involved.

Jon went onsite to take a look and work with Bates to consider various ideas. The goal, Jon said, was to "come up with the most cost-effective solution that we could get readily for the city." In the end, Jon took measurements and did a drawing of what they were thinking and reached out to fabricators.

Fortunately, Jon had an existing relationship with Smith-Blair Inc., and they were able to prioritize the manufacture of two custom pipe-to-flange reducers. They were built within five weeks and Bates had the solution installed a week later. "In this day and age, that's a very fast timeline, especially for something that is 100 percent custom," Jon said.



"They take care of us, and they do it over and over again. It doesn't matter how small or large the problem is, they take care of us."

TIM BATES,
Bates Utility Company Inc, President

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Pressure on To Get the Pipe Fixed

Core & Main came through for Bates on other parts of the project too.

“This particular water main break posed many complicated unique engineering challenges,” Jon said. “Our professional long tenured sales team quickly analyzed the situation and because of our vast knowledge and experience, was able to partner with a key vendor partner, Smith Blair, to prioritize the fabrication of two custom pipe-to-flange reducers.”

The week of installation, Bates’s team also faced some difficulties with gaskets squeezing out of joint when pressure was applied. Bates remembers this happening on a Friday night, but Jon got in touch with a Core & Main colleague who was able to quickly find replacements. After only a two-and-a-half hour delay, Bates could get back to work.

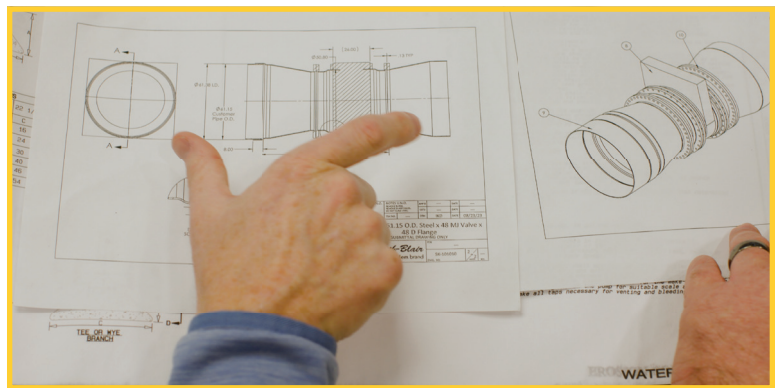
“Nobody has worked on something like this that I know of,” Bates said. Yet, Core & Main came through with a unique approach that got the water back on in St. Louis.

In the end, the solution saved Bates time and effort. After getting the exact existing diameter of the steel pipe, Core & Main provided reducers that do not need multiple fittings or require any other pipe changes. With the solution coming together in just four pieces, Bates estimates he saved several days of work.

That’s just one of the reasons Core & Main is “the only place” Bates goes for the materials and expertise he needs.

“If we need something, we need it right away, and they will bring it out to the job. When we’ve had problems with manufacturers, Core & Main District Manager Randy B. has gone to bat for us and helped us recover our costs,” Bates said. “They take care of us, and they do it over and over again. It doesn’t matter how small or large the problem is, they take care of us.”

Now, as the City’s Water Division works to upgrade its aging water infrastructure, Bates and Core & Main continue to work together to repair and replace more pipes and fittings. It’s a partnership that helps keep the water flowing where it’s intended to go, conserving a valuable resource so the St. Louis community can thrive.



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JON S.,
Core & Main, Outside Sales Representative



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