

# Norfolk Insider

City of Norfolk, NE

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## “Mike Nuttelmann – 39 Years with the Water Division”

When Mike Nuttelmann began working for the City of Norfolk Water and Sewer Division 39 years ago, there wasn't much need for water west of 25<sup>th</sup> Street, he had to go into basements to read water meters and a sewer clog might mean climbing down into a manhole.

Recently Nuttelmann was recognized for his work for the City with the Nebraska Water Industry Service Award given each year to individuals in the state who, according to the award application, “have untiringly served the Water Works Industry.”



Though meter readers now can use a touch reader to read encoded water meters from outside a home, as a meter reader in the 70's Nuttelmann had to go inside basements to get a reading.

“A lot of people left their doors open or someone would be at home back then. If the door was locked I would leave a note with my home phone on it and go back on a Saturday or after 6:00 to read their meter,” Nuttelmann said.

The West Water Treatment Plant on West Highway 275 was under construction when Nuttelmann started work. As he progressed to water plant operator he learned how to maintain proper water pressure, start booster pumps and check gauges at the plant. Currently a computer system allows all that to be done from a screen.

For the last 37 years Nuttelmann has worked on the water distribution crew that takes care of the city's water mains, fire hydrants, valves, sewer collection system, and lift stations. If a water main breaks, Nuttelmann has probably been one of the guys assisting in getting it fixed.

“It doesn't take as long to repair a water main as it did in the past. The biggest challenge is finding the leak and digging down into the street to get to it,” Nuttelmann said. Due to technology the repairs do not take as long to repair today.

In the past city workers used handheld jackhammers to break up the concrete only to find that the break may have been further down the street. Now water crews put microphones on water valves to get a more exact location as to where the leak is.

Another big change is how the City workers clean a clogged sewer pipe. Workers used to climb down into the manhole and scoop out the debris into buckets that were then carried up to a trailer parked on the street. Now, specialized equipment on trucks use a vacuum system and a high pressure hose to clean the pipes.

“People ask ‘Why do I need a meter? Water should be free.’ They don’t realize how much it costs to get water out of the ground, treat it, distribute it and maintain the distribution system. It’s easy to take clean water for granted,” Nuttelmann said.

Nuttelmann received the Service Award at the Nebraska American Water Works Association Conference in Kearney early November. His wife, Sally, and he have two daughters: Katie of Papillion and Annie of Omaha.