

Reports from the Road Warriors

Submitted by Timber Line Electric & Control

Navajo River Ranch Development, Chromo, Colorado: It was a warm, late-summer Saturday when Randy Sullivan from Timber Line stopped by Navajo River Ranch near Pagosa Springs. He was on vacation in the area with his family, and it made sense to make a site visit to look at Navajo's water facilities before Timber Line staff came to install radio telemetry. Seemed like a good idea at the time, so Randy opened the water tank to examine the primary sensing devices. Imagine his surprise when the float for the water fill valve came off in his hand! This started a series of unfortunate events.....



As Randy inspected the broken part, he determined that the splines on the float valve had been incorrectly repaired at some point; one side had 30 teeth per 360° and the other side had 24 teeth per 360°. As water poured into the tank, Randy and Tommy Crawford, a Board Member for the Water Association, tried to stem the flow by depressing the plunger manually. If you are trying to visualize this, imagine that the arm and float of your toilet has fallen off and you are trying to push the shut off valve with your finger! A decent idea, except that the schedule 40 pipe had become brittle with age and shattered.

Now the water is REALLY pouring in! So the guys went in search of a way to turn the water off before it reached the tank. They found a shunt block located underground and pried up the lid, only to discover that the Key for the valve was no where to be found! A few hurried recon trips around the development failed to turn up the

correct key, but a sprinkler key was pressed into service. The water flow was finally turned off, but not before the tank was overflowing.

After taking a deep breath, Randy and Tommy headed across the New Mexico border to the Indian Reservation hardware store. They bought all possible PVC fittings, PVC pipe, and any other items they might possibly need to put the float valve back together. Then it was a drive back into Colorado and some creative engineering to get things back together. The pipe was repaired, the splines were modified to mesh (with the help of a vice), and the whole thing put back into place. Whew! What started as a quick recon trip at 11:00 AM finally ended at 8:00 PM.

What did Randy learn?

- When mixing work and vacation, don't tell your family "I will be back in about an hour."
- When checking unfamiliar systems, don't do it on a Saturday!
- When you have to drive an hour to a hardware store, buy everything!
- Always put two or three valve keys in known areas, clearly labeled, and accessible to all staff
- Team work goes a long ways! Thanks for the help Tommy!