

Continuing Education for Manhole Rehab



By Sims Rhyne

Most experts on wastewater collection systems agree on two things:

- Wastewater collection systems contain more than 20 million manholes. Of this total, 4 million are 50 years old or older and another 5 million are 30 to 50 years old. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that approximately 50 percent of the oldest and 30 percent of the 30 to 50 year old manholes (approximately 3.5 million combined) are suffering from serious structural decay and are in need of immediate replacement or rehabilitation.
- The structural decay of these manholes comes from just a few primary causes; corrosion from gases and acids, groundwater infiltration, traffic loads and freeze/thaw cycles in cold weather climates.

So, if we know the problem and know the size of the problem, why

then hasn't manhole rehab seen the same growth rate as other areas of trenchless rehab?

As an industry, we can change this trend by taking the lead on two important fronts. First, we need to increase our focus on educating utility owners as to the importance of budgeting annual monies for manhole rehab. We all know that manholes can pose as much of a problem — in some cases more — to the collection system as any section of failing pipe. We have all seen photos of a car resting halfway into a sinkhole around a deteriorated manhole. And how about the numerous studies revealing the unnecessary amount of groundwater entering the treatment plant from leaky manholes? Add to that the advent of C-MOM and other federal regulations, and you have a recipe for utility owners to be more proactive with regard to manhole rehab programs.

Secondly, as an industry we need to continue research and develop new and better product offerings for man-

hole rehab. It is imperative that we commit to engineer products that really do extend the life of older manholes by doing things such as adding structural integrity, eliminating infiltration and preventing corrosion (Leave the manhole in better condition than when it was originally set). And if we say we can do these things, then we need to be bold and offer longer warranty periods to utility owners. A one- or even five-year warranty does not demonstrate much faith in a product. An extended warranty period demonstrates our commitment to the owner and gives them a sense that we have chosen to partner with them in the rehab process and be there long term.

As an industry let's choose to be the trendsetter and bring manhole rehab into the 21st century.

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