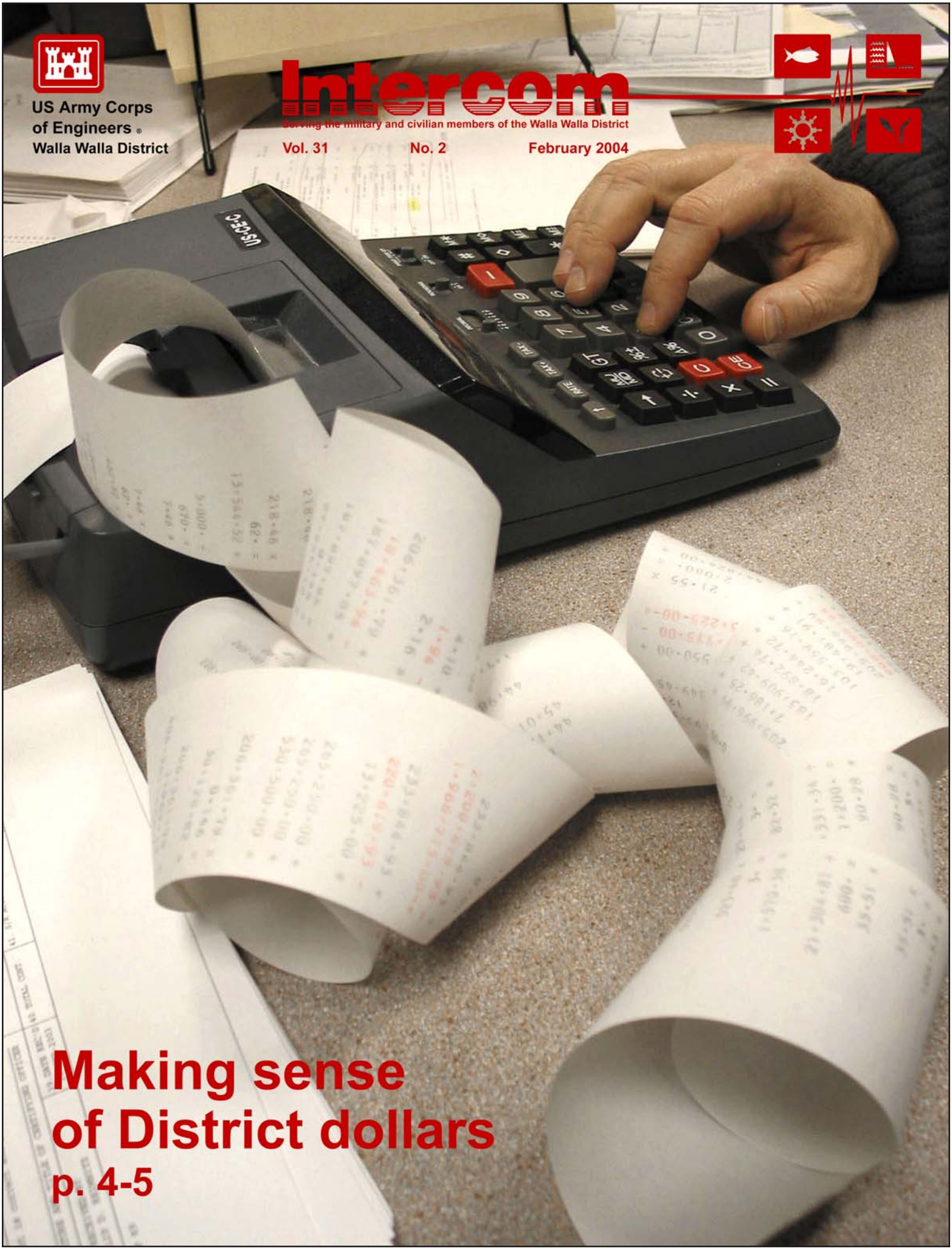

US Army Corps of Engineers
Walla Walla District

Intercom

Serving the military and civilian members of the Walla Walla District

Vol. 31 No. 2 February 2004

Making sense of District dollars

p. 4-5

Why is execution so important to the District?

Paul Wemhoener

Each year the Congress and the President negotiate a line-by-line budget for each Corps of Engineers' study or project. The difficulty of these negotiations is reflected by the frequency of continuing resolutions that often go well into October.

The final budget amounts generally mirror what the Corps of Engineers has told the Congress and the President is needed to progress a project with high administration budgetary priority. In fact, the Chief of Engineers testifies before the Congress every year to justify our budget.

Thus, the appropriations budget numbers are "our" numbers and reflect what "we" said we could execute. In essence, this is "our" scope of work contract with the administration and legislative branch of our government. It is also "our" contract with regional stakeholders and customers of Walla Walla District.

Understanding this should explain why execution is important to each District employee. Not meeting our commitments is a professional integrity issue, as well as a credibility issue for the entire Walla Walla team.

Some folks might say, "I'm part of a support organization and don't work on specific projects. Therefore, it is not my problem."

Not true. Let me explain.

Each one of us, either directly or indirectly, contributes to and supports the delivery of Walla Walla District products. Frankly, if you don't, maybe you should not be employed by the District.

Remember, our cost of doing business is made up of direct labor charges multiplied by the effective rate and our general administrative costs.

If our G&A costs are overstated at the beginning of the year, the G&A rate must be reduced at mid-year. Thus, we have overcharged some customers and undercharged others. We may not be able to meet schedules and budgets. These are our commitments to the Congress, the President, our customers and stakeholders. If cars are not available, if needed publications are not in the library, if computers are not up and running 24/7, for example, this could affect our performance.

Every one of our 670 employees can either be part of the problem or part of the solution.

Another way to look at this: would you repeatedly hire people to do a job if they failed to do what they said they would do, when they said they would do it and at the price negotiated?

Let's all strive to be an organization of choice!

Paul Wemhoener
Deputy District Engineer
for Project Management

Snow days

Acting District Commander Maj. Harry L. Cunningham and Sharon White, executive assistant, brush and scrape more than a foot of snow off a government vehicle before they depart the District headquarters. Heavy snowfall in the Walla Walla Valley piled up and stayed for several weeks during January. Cunningham issued an inclement weather policy, establishing a liberal leave policy for District members to use at will when snow and ice created dangerous road or weather conditions.

Human Resources delivers NSPS preview

Story and photo by Gina Baltrusch

Walla Walla District employees left standing room only during recent briefings about the new National Security Personnel System.

While the details of the NSPS are still being developed, employees seemed eager to learn the basics. Chairs in the headquarters' Castle Room were filled as Ray Quinn, human resources chief, presented information about the new system during several overview sessions in January. Interest on the topic prompted HR officials to schedule additional briefings in February. Employees at the dams and field offices were briefed earlier in January.

The system's most obvious difference is a new pay scale affecting General Schedule employees called "pay banding." The new scale follows a performance-based model that affords the opportunity for higher pay and rewards based on individual performance. Wage schedule employees, not subject to pay banding, will see some changes in how union-represented bargaining actions are conducted.

The most common questions from District members were, "When is this going to happen?" and "How will it affect my pay?"

"We don't know exactly when NSPS will go into effect here at the District – the details of implementation are still being worked. We've been told it will probably happen sometime between 18 and 24 months," said Quinn. "As for folks' pay – no one will lose money when we convert to the NSPS. After that, it's based on an individual's performance whether they move up or down the pay scale.

"Flexibility is the key element of pay banding – flexibility for employees and the agency," Quinn added. "It will be easier for high performers to increase their earnings and move between pay bands. On the no-so-happy side of things, any poor performers will find themselves losing out on pay increases, and over time, sliding down the scale."

NSPS was authorized by Congress in the fiscal year 2004 National Defense Authorization Act, signed Nov. 24 by President Bush, and will be the new human resources management system for the Department of Defense civilian workforce. The law allows the DoD to establish new rules for how civilians are hired, assigned, compensated, promoted and disciplined, within the framework of merit principles, accommodation of veterans' preference and respect for employees' right to bargain. With that authority, the department will develop a flexible and fair system that will help DoD attract, retain, reward, and grow a civilian workforce to meet the national security demands of the twenty-first century, according to an NSPS news release.

Ray Quinn, Walla Walla District's chief of human resources briefs employees on the National Security Personnel System.

Under the law, Sec. 9902(a), the design of NSPS must follow these principles:

- Be flexible and contemporary
- Not waive or modify merit system principles
- Not waive or modify prohibited personnel practices (laws to protect veterans' preference and whistleblowers and to prevent nepotism and political favoritism)
- Ensure that employees may organize and bargain collectively
- Include a performance management system that is fair, credible, and transparent, linking performance management to the agency's strategic plan
- Provide adequate training on NSPS
- Provide effective safeguards to ensure that the system is fair and equitable
- Ensure that the overall amount allocated for compensation in the civilian pay fund is not less than what it would have been under the former personnel system through fiscal year 2008

On the Cover...

Gina Baltrusch

Bill Keyes, accountant, calculates amounts for several budgetary reports produced by Walla Walla District's resource management office. RM employees track the way money is spent, advise managers and handle a variety of financial tasks essential to doing the District's business.

Intercom

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It's all about the mon

Story and photos by Gina Baltrusch

People working in government often talk about using the "right pot of money" or "color of money." They're talking about ensuring that when the public's tax dollars are used, the money is spent on that for which it was intended.

Money comes into Walla Walla District by appropriation bills passed by Congress, funds from the Bonneville Power Administration and other non-federal, cost-sharing partners, and work the District does for other Corps and federal agencies. The District's annual budget usually runs between $130-140 million.

At the District headquarters, the Plans, Programs and Project Management Division and the Resource Management Office serve as the primary money-managing organizations. Together, they keep the money coming in, ensure it gets spent on the right things and shepherd the colors and pots of money used to do the District's business.

"Our Programs Branch develops the program for execution of funds allocated to the District in the president's budget. That budget includes operations and maintenance funds and any congressionally approved construction funds," said Paul Wemhoener, deputy district engineer for project management and chief of PPPMD.

Once money comes in, PPPMD managers decide how it will be distributed – essentially, how much to put toward which program or project.

"Those pots are set up in our bookkeeping system as funded work items," said Nick Moramarco, chief of resource management.

Categories like labor, rent, information technology support and supplies are funded by work items and tracked by assigne codes. Resource management personnel help division, offi managers set up their budgets so they can better manage

"There are hundreds of budgetary codes," Moramarco e we're going to be able to accurately report on the District' have to be sure managers' budgets are set up correctly an recorded against the proper code. For example, if you lum home utility expenses in with your rent, at the end of the wouldn't know exactly what you spent on electric. The cha help us separate all that for an accurate accountability of organization performs as stewards of the public's money."

PPPMD brings in additional business for the District potential work projects within our borders.

"Sometimes, these projects are eligible for full federal said Wemhoener. "However, most get done on a cost-sha with project customers. The spending of those project fu to be recorded by budget codes."

In any given year, the District faces unfunded projec must be done, such as unanticipated maintenance, but n funds were allocated to execute.

"Managers regularly review their project budgets wh the overhead budgets for any sign of potential excess," sa Moramarco. "When managers report that they'll have m over, the District can redirect it to one of those unfunded

Planning, budget setup, accurate recording, efficient attentive monitoring of the various pots and colors of mo District meet its execution goals.

Above, Trena Harmon, right, an accountant in the Resource Management Office, and Jeanne Gomsrud, a program analyst in the Programs and Project Management Branch, discuss appropriations for work being done on one of the projects. Right, Bill Keyes, a RM accountant, processes jury duty payments submitted by District employees. Among other financial tasks, RM coordinates the travel charge card program, oversees timekeeping and payroll and stewards the District's Army Suggestion Program.

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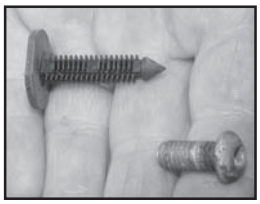
Above, Nick Moramarco, finance manager, and Terry Atchison, information manager, go over statements. Left, Alan Pomraning, a general engineer in PPPMD, prepares to spend project money by discussing the construction phase with David Opbroek, chief of construction.

Dana Knudtson, a civil engineer in Planning, Programs and Project Management Division, analyzes the proposed fiscal year 2005 civil works budget as recently submitted by the president to the Congress.

Granite crew tests new hardware on vertical barriers



Story and photos by Gina Baltrusch

Sometimes, you just have to try something to see if it works.

Maintenance workers at Lower Granite Lock and Dam think they've have a solution to a developing problem with the vertical barrier screens at the dam.

The woven-metal screens extend down more than 100 feet between each turbine intake slot, deterring fish from entering the turbine area.

Over the years, electrolysis caused by the close proximity of different metals in the water had a corrosive effect. This caused the bolts and mounting hardware that attach the screens to the slot to decay.

"The bolts were getting loose. We had to do something to fix them so they won't deteriorate to the point where they didn't keep the fish out," said Matt Dinoto, an utilityman at the dam. "And, we sure didn't want the bolts or some larger piece of the screens falling into the turbine intake.

"I'm not sure who came up with the plastic bolt idea. We consulted with Engineering Division and this was one of their suggestions," said Rob Lustig, mechanical engineer at the dam. "Using the plastic bolts and keeper bars should eliminate the electrolysis problem. If this is effective, it has potential for use on the fish screens at all of our dams."

"Okay, it's an experiment," said Dinoto, as he prepared to drill bolts holes in a keeper bar, "but, one that should work. We set the plastic bolts in with a big shot of silicone to ensure a solid fit.

Matt Dinoto, utilityman at Lower Granite Lock and Dam, determines where he needs to drill new holes in the vertical barrier screen frame for installing the plastic hardware. There are more than 500 bolts on each screen.

"I know of maintenance folks at other dams using the plastic bolts for other things, " he added. "We'll see if they work as well on this."

Over the next year, maintenance workers will keep checking their screen experiment. If the plastic hardware holds well, they might replace the metal hardware on all the intake screens.

Long-distance 'Happy Holidays'

Vincent Ruzicka Jr., a power plant operator from McNary Dam, deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, visits long-distance via video-teleconference Dec. 22 with family members at the Walla Walla District headquarters. The District's Emergency Operations Center sets up video-teleconferences for deployed employees and their families. The EOC extended the VTC invitation to deployed members of local U.S. National Guard and Reserve units.

Gina Baltrusch

Gulf Region Division activated; NWW supports North District

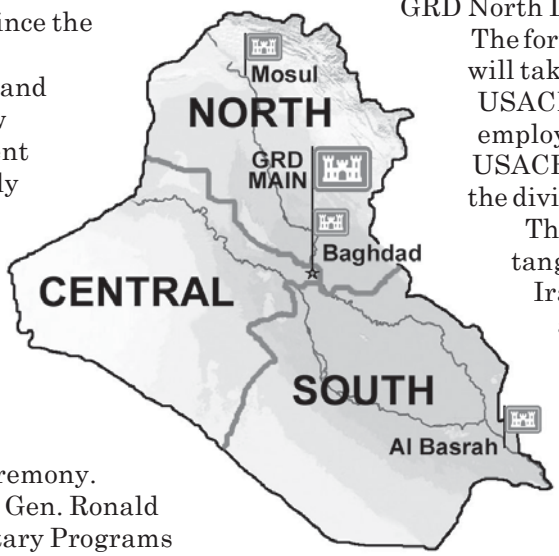
from a GRD news release

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's Gulf Region Division (Provisional) was activated during a ceremony Jan. 25 at the Convention Center in Baghdad, Iraq. The new division unifies the separate USACE elements that have served in Iraq since the start of the war.

Several hundred Iraqi, Coalition and American dignitaries joined the new division's personnel to mark the event that also celebrated the Corps' widely recognized contributions to Operation Iraqi Freedom. Lt. Gen. Robert B. Flowers, USACE chief of engineers, expressed his deep pride in the entire Corps, especially the hundreds of USACE volunteers who have selflessly served in Iraq, through a video that was shown during the ceremony.

Now under the command of Maj. Gen. Ronald L. Johnson, former Director of Military Programs for the Corps, the provisional division includes three districts, the North in Mosul, the Central in Baghdad and the South in Basrah.

The major components of the division are the former Iraq Provisional Command, the Iraq Reconstruction Office, Task Force Restore Iraqi Oil, Task Force Restore Iraqi Electricity and the Iraq Area Office. Overall, the GRD plays a role in overseeing billions of dollars in reconstruction and improvements in the newly liberated nation of Iraq.



Fourteen Walla Walla District employees are deployed in support of the GRD – most of them serving with other Northwestern Division volunteers in the GRD North District.

The forward-deployed division is lean but will take maximum advantage of the USACE "reach back" capability, employing the talents of all 35,000 USACE employees worldwide to support the division's requirements.

This USACE team effort facilitates tangible, rapid improvements to the Iraqi infrastructure, especially oil and electricity, as well as construction support to our military forces.

The division will continue to rely on partnering with Iraqi engineers to leverage their talents and help build Iraq's public engineering capacity.

Lt. Gen Ricardo S. Sanchez, commanding general of the Combined Joint Task Force – 7, said the new division "underscores the coalition's absolute commitment to working hand in hand with the Iraqi people, their ministries and national government to improve the quality of life for all Iraqis and establish an enduring, safe and secure environment in which a democratic government may thrive."

WANTED: stories, photographs, ideas

Did you ever wonder how the stories make it to the Intercom? Most begin as ideas submitted by staff offices and employees.

Do you know someone at work who has an unusual hobby? Are you working on something using new techniques or equipment?

The Public Affairs Office accepts and considers articles, photos and story ideas for publication in the Intercom.

Check out some of the bylines and photo credits in past issues of the Intercom – you'll see names from other duty sections and projects. They are folks who had a story idea, shot a good photo at work or had information that would be useful to others.

Digital photos should be shot at 1200x1600 pixels. Most digital cameras more than two megabytes will accommodate this setting.

Everyone in the photos should be identified, with their work location and job title. Posed photos or presentation photos should be avoided. Images of people doing things are more interesting. Be sure we can see their eyes.

Stories should have the basic information of who, what, where, when and why. Take a photo to go with your story that will show readers what you're writing about.

The Intercom editor reserves the right to edit sotries for clarity, length, accuracy, policy, security and propriety.

For more information, contact PAO at cenww-pa@usace.mil or call (509) 527-7020.

Pipes freeze, HQ awash

Story and photos by Gina Baltrusch

Fire alarms sounded Jan. 6 when fire-control sprinkler pipes burst and water rushed down from the ceiling in the District headquarters entry.

Weeks of below-freezing temperatures in Walla Walla caused the water inside the pipes to freeze, broke several pipe fittings, flooded the lobby and soaked nearby offices.

The alarm automatically triggered when the sprinkler system indicated water use, notifying fire stations as though the fire-abatement system had been activated.

Firefighters responding to the alarm helped District employees move furniture and mop up the watery mess.

"I was amazed how many people stepped in to help," said Tami Vance, building manager. "Folks from sections throughout the building pitched in to clean up."

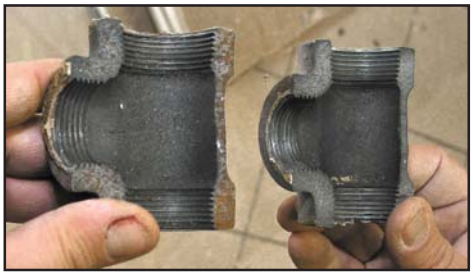
Work areas adjacent to the lobby had to be cleared of furniture for a few days while carpeting dried. Volunteers swept and mopped water out the front door from the tiled lobby and hallway.

Repair contracts were issued, and the sprinkler system was working within three weeks, said Vance. Repairs cost about $10,000.

Logistics personnel took action to prevent repeat incidents.

"We blocked off the intake vents that allowed the cold air in near the sprinkler system," said Charlie Kidd, building engineer. "We also plan to put vents in the duct system to allow temperature-regulated air in that area to prevent another water-freezing problem."

Lyall Kindelspire, a duplicating systems operator, makes waves as he pushes water out the front door.



Above, ice forming inside the emergency sprinkler system in the headquarters building entrance split apart one pipe fitting, burst a hole out in a second and cracked two others. Below, Jason Garcia, a S & K Mountain Construction worker, removes drywall material to access the sprinkler system.

Dave Ogren, service technician foreman for Cascade Fire Protection, cuts new sections of pipe to repair the broken sections of the District headquarters building's fire-control sprinkler system.