



Howard Lewis at Affinity Water

Winner of the Street Works UK Long Service award 2017

Street Works UK is the UK industry association representing utilities solely on street works issues. Street Works UK represents some 56 utility companies and contractors engaged in the street works sector, and 18 specialist sub-contractors who provide equipment, materials and services supporting street works activities. Our members represent major contributors to economic growth and work to deliver gas, electricity, water and telecommunications to both individual consumers and UK plc. In order to continue this drive for further improvements within the industry – we have developed the Street Works UK Vision for Street Works, which revolves around seven main principles:

- Safety
- High Quality
- Minimise Disruption
- Keep the Public Fully Informed
- Sustainable Methods and Materials
- Avoid Damage to Underground Assets
- Innovation

This case study is an example of the street works sector delivering on these principles and turning the vision into reality.

Overview

Howard Lewis is a Community Operations Delivery Manager at Affinity Water. He has worked within the water industry for 40 years and now leads the network teams who work tirelessly 24/7 to repair and maintain Affinity Water's network.

Affinity Water provides 900 million litres of water each day to a population of more than 3.5 million people via over 10,000 miles of pipe network. This distance would stretch from London to Southern Australia, which is where Howard spent several years working; with South East Water Melbourne and as an Operational Water Expert for United Utilities in Adelaide, on their South Australian Water bid.

Customers expect water to be always available at the turn of the tap. However, there are occasionally interruptions to people's supply as planned and reactive works take place on pressurised networks.

This highlights the importance of the repair teams that work behind the scenes to ensure that interruptions are kept to a minimum. For over 20 years, Howard Lewis has led Affinity Water's Network Delivery teams to great effect, engineering repair solutions to complex situations where there isn't an off the shelf fix.

Howard deserves to be recognised in his field because he bridges the gap between engineering problem solving, innovation and customer experience in every day situations.



Often engineers work behind the scenes, more comfortable in the detail of the theory than the on site application if it. Howard is a different type of engineer, designing repair solutions and then joining front line teams to see the repair through to completion.

Howard prides himself in collaborating with others to put the customer at the centre of everything he does. It is this ethos that has led him to be a key player in the deployment of non intrusive repair methodologies.

When things go wrong, he uses his knowledge to establish plans from the beginning of an incident and coaches others to deliver them.

An example of this was the under pressure installation of an overland 12” trunk main following a burst under a stream that would have led to around 300 customers being without water one Christmas.

The repair immediately focused on restoring supplies using under pressure technologies, before a permanent solution was installed in collaboration with the Environment Agency to minimise the environmental impact. Howard oversaw the repair and thanks to this approach, the water supply was uninterrupted and customers were not inconvenienced.

In 2016 Howard was working alongside teams repairing a difficult mains burst on the A1 road in North London. The burst had closed three lanes and threatened to cause severe traffic disruption and misery for thousands of road users. Howard led his team from the front and ensured everyone was working to the same objectives. With the hard work of his team, the engagement of key reinstatement suppliers and Transport for London, the road was reopened before the evening rush hour.

Howard takes an active interest in his profession, travelling around the World to learn about the latest innovations in network maintenance. This approach to continuous learning keeps him at the top of his field.

He is already widely acknowledged as an expert in his field, for example, he has been called as an expert witness in the High Courts of Justice on a dispute around the repair of Fire Hydrants.

He is committed to the continuous improvement and tirelessly seeks out innovative techniques and products to help make his team's activities safer, more cost effective and more efficient - minimising customer disruption.

It is this drive to learn and develop that has taken him from a Network Operative to a Senior Manager leading over 100 people. This has helped earned him the respect of his team as an experienced operator and inspirational leader.

Howard is available for his team night and day, providing reassurance, support and decision making which enables them to be effective in their roles.

There are numerous people across the industry who have excelled in their field, thanks to the time Howard has invested in them. He operates in a mentoring capacity to people at all levels



within the industry, from new starters through to established Senior Managers, wanting to build the same effective delivery teams he has.

Howard's has produced a 'how to' video guide which provides colleagues with an overview of the core techniques and technologies available to repair water mains. A great engineer and leader gets the best out of themselves and others, and this is what Howard does.

Howard also identified the need to develop new cable clamping and cutting tools to address the dangers of multiple deaths and serious injuries each year from contact with electricity cables. Despite this, no properly insulated cable clamping and cutting tools were readily available.

He therefore contacted PF Cusack and JAFCO, specialists in tools development and supply, and worked with them to develop two new tools for clamping and cutting pipework, which would protect the user in a safety critical situation of an electrical cable being incorrectly identified as a water service pipe.

A lot of thought went in to the design of these new tools and two sets were produced as prototypes for trial in the field at Affinity Water excavation sites. Having been proven as resilient and practical, the tools are now going into production with JAFCO, with BS8020 approval.

Affinity Water has now ordered 500 sets of these new tools and they will now be available to all utility companies for use in the field, initially from PF Cusack, one of the UK's leading suppliers of equipment.

It is hoped that their eventual widespread use by other utility companies will save many lives in the future, dramatically decreasing the continued threat of cable strikes to operatives.

In summary, Howard should be recognised because he deploys his skill in high pressure situations to design repair solutions that help thousands of customers by avoiding or limiting interruptions to their water supply. He is a dedicated professional and instils confidence in his team, so they can always deliver for the customer.