

Elements

News for Employees Present & Past **Fall/Winter 2023**

ACROSS THE COMPANY

Answering the call

11/21/2023

[NW Natural crews hit the road to help Avista customers after large outage in Washington and Idaho.](#)

When a plow struck and ruptured a major pipeline supplying over 35,000 Avista Utilities customers in eastern Washington and Idaho, NW Natural crews sprang into action to help restore service. It was the largest outage in Avista's history. According to the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission, the rupture occurred when a landowner was installing a plastic drain line and struck the gas pipeline with a plow, peeling a large hole in the top. The line was buried 41 inches deep, but the landowner had not contacted 811 to request locates prior to beginning work, the WUTC reported.

Through a mutual aid agreement, about 20 NW Natural techs and two supervisors joined 800 Avista workers and another several hundred peer utility crew members from 8 states to help get customer service up and going again, including turning meters back on and re-lighting appliances. NW Natural crews recently returned home on a 7-hour drive after working 16-hour days for about a week.

Relight areas were sorted into zones, with completion goals for each. Customers received a robocall with an expected arrival time for a tech, and goals were updated daily – allowing techs to see their success on a daily basis.

With such a daunting task, safety was always front-of-mind. Crew members used lights and headlamps to light up often-dark areas in unfamiliar surroundings, and reported zero injuries or incidents.

And despite long days far from home, our NW Natural colleagues returned with a sense of pride from a job well done and buoyed by the gratitude from people thrust into a tough situation. For affected customers, a utility crew member knocking on the door meant getting furnace heat back, hot showers and stoves ready for a fall meal.



Nearly two dozen NW Natural employees responded to an Avista system outage.

And in one case, a crew visit likely saved a life. After getting no answer on a second attempt to relight one customer's home, Adam Jenson and Mark Hughes knocked on all the doors and windows, and were then able to see a propane heater running in the customer's living room. The customer's dog nudged a door open, and Adam and Mark noticed a strong odor. With no response from the customer, they tested for and confirmed presence of carbon monoxide, called 911 and notified supervisors. Emergency responders subsequently found the customer asleep in his living room. Ultimately, the customer seemed to be in good condition and techs warned him about the dangers of running the propane heater inside. Adam and Mark said they had "no doubt" this intervention saved the customer's life.

Others relying on gas heat were likewise grateful. After relighting heat at an animal clinic – on Free Kitten Day, no less – Sunset CFS Tech Shaun Wagner got a thank you snuggle from a small feline resident of the clinic.

Parkrose CFS Tech Jacob Feldhacker recalled the smiles and an elderly customer who wanted a hug for getting her heat turned back on. He said the gratitude made his day and kept him motivated through long, hard days.

Central CFS Supervisor Bill Adler marveled at the pride NW Natural employees showed going about their day helping customers get appliances back up and running.

Here's more of what responders had to say:

"The group I had from NW Natural was fantastic, never complained and was always ready to help any customer that needed gas. They would have worked all night long, 24 hours a day if we let them, just to help the customers. I had many conversations with the folks that came to help and they always had a positive answer and almost all the answers were that they came to help folks with hot water, heat, and restore their lives to normal." – *Kevin Williams, Supervisor*

"Most everyone was just super happy when they opened the door and got a lot of people saying that they were super excited to see us. Everyone kept thanking us for our hard work and effort." – *Taylor Brown, Salem CFS Tech*

"Being a part of something so big and being a part of a group to help restore these services to the customers is what it's all about." – *Jake Humbird, Sunset CFS Tech*

"The thing that stood out to me most was just the overall gratitude and thankfulness of all the customers we visited. They were put in a tough situation and they weren't angry, just very thankful we were here to help." – *Phillip Kenyon, Sunset CFS Tech*

"Everywhere we went, no matter where you were, everyone would stop and thank you, open doors for you and express their gratitude for assisting them with getting the gas on. We had cars driving by yelling thank you, waving their hands." – *Cameron Barry, Clark County Commercial Tech*

NW Natural Renewables' first project begins operations

8/4/2023

NW Natural Renewables reached the finish line on its first project. It's contracted to invest approximately \$50 million in two facilities that are being developed by EDL in Ohio. Operations began for the first facility in August and we expect the second facility to come online soon. When those facilities achieve full commercial operations, we have contracts to sell the RNG volumes to

investment grade counterparties for the next 20 years. [Click here to read more about the announcement from project partners.](#)

Sunriver Utilities, a NW Natural Water company, celebrates major facility upgrade

7/26/2023

Last week Sunriver Utilities Company invited residents and the community to celebrate completion of its state-of-the-art wastewater treatment facility upgrade. Justin Palfreyman, president of NW Natural Holdings and NW Natural, joined partners for a ceremonial ribbon-cutting that followed a four-year, \$18.5 million upgrade project. The upgraded facility can now process 1.5 million gallons of water daily, with a new membrane bioreactor producing Class A recycled water.

This project represents the single-largest infrastructure investment by Sunriver Utilities and addressed key community concerns including noise and odor reduction, and aesthetic improvements. Close to 100 people attended the ceremony and toured the facility. [Click here to read more about the project and ribbon-cutting ceremony.](#)



IN THE COMMUNITY

Safely Growing Gardens

6/2/2023

NW Natural's corporate philanthropy team hosts a safety training for Program of Focus partner Growing Gardens at 250 Taylor.

An integral part of NW Natural's culture is to forge relationships with and further the efforts of charitable organizations in the communities we serve, and our corporate responsibility team is always looking for new and creative ways to support our nonprofit partners.

An event hosted in March by NW Natural on behalf of [Growing Gardens – one of NW Natural's four Programs of Focus](#) – is an example of how our company offers our non-profit partners support that extends beyond funding and volunteering.

Growing Gardens is committed to using the power of gardening to help communities who have been historically marginalized and denied access to healthy food, including people of color, people who are incarcerated and underrepresented youth.

Sharing safety as a value

Much of the work Growing Gardens does is physically strenuous, and the organization wanted to ensure their staff and volunteers were working



safely. However, safety certification and safety coordination instruction were not something they had done on a larger scale as the organization's head count had grown, plus this type of training can be expensive – especially for a smaller non-profit.

Knowing that safety is one of NW Natural's core values, Growing Gardens reached out to us for support and direction on first aid, CPR and AED training. We gladly met the nonprofit's request.

For the event, our corporate philanthropy team worked with members of our safety team to secure a trusted CPR/AED trainer, and also worked with our hospitality team to provide a welcoming space and breakfast at the 250 Taylor conference center.

"At NW Natural, we work to meet our nonprofit partners where they are and tailor our support whenever we can. We were so pleased to have the opportunity to connect on our shared value of safety and to leverage our internal experts and resources," said Mary Moerlins, NW Natural's director of corporate philanthropy and environmental policy. "We're happy to know that Growing Gardens is now more prepared to prevent and respond to any accidents that could happen as they do their important work."

All Growing Gardens employees and board members had the opportunity to participate in the half day session that included first aid, CPR and AED training and certifications. This provided the organization's leadership and staff peace of mind as they pursue their mission of connecting community members with gardening for food security and empowerment.

The power of partnerships

NW Natural also provided a translator for the training session so that Growing Gardens employees for whom English is a second language were able to fully participate. The event was a huge success. Growing Gardens staff expressed their appreciation for NW Natural's approach to partnership to help them achieve their goal of getting their staff trained. Jason Skipton, Executive Director of Growing Gardens, shared in a follow up conversation, "Thank you for pushing and leaning into what true partnership looks and feels like. Thank you for stretching your thinking on how we can engage as a community."

The corporate responsibility team is encouraging all our employees and retirees to volunteer with [Growing Gardens](#), as well as our other Program of Focus partners to help families and children at risk, including [Adelante Mujeres](#), [Asian Health & Service Center](#) (AHSC) and [Store to Door](#).