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Drinking Water  
Week 2010

## Water Infrastructure at a Turning Point

*Throughout North America, water pipes running below our streets are in need of replacement. It's time to bring the conversation about water infrastructure above ground.*

- The million miles of water pipes below our streets represent an enormous public trust largely built and paid for by earlier generations.
- Much of the water infrastructure below our streets was constructed during three periods: the late 1800s, the Roaring 1920s and during the Post World War II baby boom.
- The pipes from these different eras are due to wear out concurrently over the next three decades.
- In the United States alone, the cost of replacing water infrastructure in the next 30 years will top \$250 billion, according to a 2001 study by the American Water Works Association.
- The expense of replacing water infrastructure will be met mostly through higher water rates that better reflect the full cost of the service.
- The stewardship of our buried water pipes falls to us. Reinvesting in water infrastructure will prevent today's concerns from becoming a crisis in the future.

We are at the 'Dawn of the Replacement Era'

- An extensive American Water Works Association study of 20 large and medium utilities suggests that by 2030 the average utility will spend about three and a half times as much on pipe replacement as it does today.
- The average household served by large and medium utilities will have to spend between \$550 and \$2,300 over 30 years to meet repair and replacement costs.
- Households served by small water systems will be impacted two or three times greater than larger systems, since there are fewer people to pay the costs.
- Communities that begin addressing water infrastructure today will avoid "rate shock" in the future.



**American Water Works  
Association**

The Authoritative Resource on Safe Water<sup>®</sup>