

Water and the 2002 Winter Olympics

by Ryan Loader, Ford Meter Box

Preparing for the Salt Lake City 2002 Winter Games in Park City was no small task. According to Rich Hilbert, Water Superintendent for Park City, Utah, planning started almost seven years prior to the Games. Two years ago quarterly planning meetings were held to discuss everything from transportation to the water system. Six months prior to the Games, weekly meetings were held. During the last few weeks before the Games, Superintendent Hilbert noted that all aspects of preparation were detailed to the point of “splitting hairs.”

Security for the Games was a major concern for the water department, and many water related items including pump stations, wells, and water sources were outfitted with security devices. For example, anytime a door was opened to a well or pump station, key people were alerted. Other security measures monitored water content and activity at all times. Security specific to the Olympics included the location by a Global Positioning System (GPS) of all reservoirs and water sources. Security forces used this information to direct regular flyovers by Blackhawk helicopters. Although the Olympic Games are gone, Park City will benefit from many of these security measures, slightly modified but still in place.



Rich Hilbert, Water Superintendent of Park City, Utah led his team of water utility workers as they tackled the olympic-sized task of providing adequate water service for the 2002 Winter Games.

Along with the security challenges, the water department encountered typical water-related problems, including several frozen meters, four mainline breaks and four service lateral breaks. Also during the games, water resources hit record lows especially in the well-populated areas of the city, (i.e., Deer Valley). For the first time ever in the winter, the water department had to change how water was directed in the city by opening regulators and redistributing water from one zone to another.

Superintendent Hilbert said that in his 20 years of working in the department he has never seen that happen before.

Hosting the 2002 Olympics was a once in a lifetime experience. For a water utility, the challenge of providing service to a large number of visitors in the dead of winter was complicated by the concern for assuring uncompromising security. Through teamwork and flexibility the Park City water department was proud to meet these demands. Asked if he would like to see Utah host the Olympics again, Superintendent Hilbert replied, “Oh absolutely. The only thing that I would do different next time would be to go to more events and get involved in the Games themselves.”

