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Fort Wayne's Water Main Breaks Part of National Crisis

Fort Wayne, Jan 10, 2011 -- "The City of Fort Wayne is the latest to fall victim to the water main break epidemic spreading throughout North America," today said PVC Pipe Association spokesman Bruce Hollands.

Each year, approximately 255,000 water main breaks occur throughout North America – or some 700 every day – mainly as a result of corrosion (Larry 2000). Moreover, according to a 2002 congressional study, corrosion costs U.S. drinking water and wastewater systems over \$50.7 billion annually, or more than \$1 trillion dollars over the next twenty years.

"Fort Wayne's water main break is typical of those occurring across the nation due to the corrosion degrading the iron pipes still making up much of our underground water systems," Mr. Hollands said. "Using alternate and more sustainable piping materials like PVC would make sense, but some municipalities still exclude it from their procurement specifications – even if there are no valid reasons to do so since it meets all required standards," he added.

PVC piping is cost-effective and long lasting. An American Water Works Association Research Foundation study confirms its life expectancy exceeds 110 years. Its lighter weight makes it cheaper to manufacture, easier and less costly to handle, transport and install. As well, PVC pipes will achieve significant savings over their life cycle, contrary to corrosion-prone piping systems which waste increasing amounts of energy as they deteriorate.

"Given its great sustainability and flexibility, PVC would have prevented Fort Wayne's latest water main break," said Mr. Hollands. "Unfortunately, many municipalities across the nation exclude it for groundless reasons ranging from the need to further study the material to reluctance to try something new. But PVC pipe isn't new: it's a proven technology that's been widely used since the 1950s," he said.

"Cities and local governments are facing hard economic times, and taxpayers are demanding more bang for their buck; so durable and cost-effective materials like PVC should be used to prevent water main breaks like the one in Fort Wayne," Mr. Hollands said.

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Bruce Hollands is Executive Director of the PVC Pipe Association, a non-profit organization that serves the engineering, regulatory, public health and standardization communities (<http://www.uni-bell.org/>).

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