

WASA valve stolen; 200,000 face dry taps

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NEWS

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Main valve stolen; WASA suspects scrap-iron dealers

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BANDITS yesterday stole an air valve from the largest main belonging to the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA), resulting in the loss of three million gallons of water and the disruption in supply to 200,000 consumers.

"An emergency situation has arisen that is currently affecting the water supply to customers in Central and South Trinidad. It was discovered that scrap-iron and metal thieves removed an eight-inch air valve from directly off the 54-inch Caroni South Transmission main resulting in major water loss," a release from WASA stated yesterday.

The theft occurred near Perseverance in Chaguanas.

"The Caroni South Transmission main transmits 43 million gallons of water per day for distribution to households and business places in Central and South Trinidad. The estimated population size affected is 200,000. An air valve is used to remove air locks from the system to enable the smooth transmission of water," the release added.

Questioned yesterday as to whether she felt the theft was as a result of an inside job, since the *Express* understands special tools are needed to remove such a valve, Ellen Lewis, the general manager,

Corporate Communications, at WASA, stated: "WASA workers will protect WASA infrastructure and this is a clear case of scrap-iron and metal thieves engaged in the scrap-iron and metal business seeking to profit, in a most callous way, at the expense of the people of Trinidad and Tobago."

"In fact there are now two persons charged after being caught red-handed stealing 20" and 24" ductile iron pipes from one of our stockpiles at Williamsville. They were to be offered for sale to scrap iron dealers."

As a result of this latest case of vandalism, WASA called on "all scrap-iron and metal dealers in the country to desist from interfering with or stealing the utility's pipeline infrastructure."

After the theft the system was isolated to stop further loss of millions of gallons of water, Lewis said. Repairs originally estimated to end at 8 p.m. yesterday were, however, completed just before noon.

"Notwithstanding the completion of repairs, because of the system of water scheduling and the location of some communities at the extremities of the system, full normalisation in supply will take place over a 24 hour period," WASA stated yesterday.

Police officers have been called in to investigate the theft, WASA stated.



DEEP TROUBLE: WASA pipeline maintenance crew members work in waist-high water to replace the stolen air valve from the 54-inch Caroni South Transmission main near Perseverance in Chaguanas yesterday. —Photo courtesy WASA