

# NEWS



**REPAIRED:** Officials from WASA replace a stolen air valve from a 54 inch main in Chaguanas after it was stolen by thieves.

## As thieves steal WASA air valve

# 43M gallons of water waste

By CECILY ASSON

APPROXIMATELY 43 million gallons of drinking water, enough to service an entire community, were lost on Monday night after thieves swooped down on the Water and Sewerage Authority's (WASA) Caroni South Transmission Main at Perseverance, Chaguanas and stole an air valve.

The damage however has since been repaired and police are now searching for the thieves who according to reports moved into the area with heavy equipment including a blow torch with which to cut loose the valve. Water is said to have shot 60 feet into the air as the valve was removed.

An air valve is used to remove air locks from the system to enable the smooth transmission of water, a WASA official said. A statement issued by WASA's Communication Unit yesterday, said that scrap iron and metal thieves stole an eight inch air valve directly off the 54 inch main resulting in major water loss and an interruption in water supply.

Over 200,000 consumers across South and Central Trinidad were left without water for several hours. Police have been called in to conduct an investigation into the matter as the authority said "the situation is being treated with the utmost seriousness."

WASA's pipeline crew was able to complete installation of a new air valve on a section of the 54 inch main just before noon yesterday. Consumers however have been warned that "because of the system of water scheduling and the location of some communities at the extremities of the system, full normalisation in the supply will take place over a 24 hour period."

The Caroni South Transmission main is said to be the largest in the network and transmits 43 million gallons of water per day for distribution to households and businesses in Central and South Trinidad.

WASA yesterday appealed for the public's assistance in finding the thieves. "The Authority learnt that scrap iron and metal thieves in an elaborate operation had stolen the air valve. In view of the situation WASA is calling upon all scrap iron and metal dealers in the country to be on the lookout for persons offering for sale pipeline infrastructure."