

ETG's South Avenue Project Tests Skoda's Skills From Start to Finish

Put out to bid as a night job, the 7,000' of 8" pressure reinforcement main on South Avenue, State Route 28, in Fanwood, NJ, would have the usual problems associated with working at night. As a night project, this bid created problems much more difficult to deal with than just thick blacktop, concrete, traffic and lighting. According to Mark Daly, General Manager and Engineer for Skoda Contracting, "Working at night on the predominantly residential section of this highway would create more headaches and customer complaints than any other part of the project."

Mark turned to Skoda's Derek Menton, Vice President of Operations, to reach out to his NJDOT contacts to consider alternatives. Within 24 hours, the combination of Skoda's reputation and Menton's promises, garnered approval to have the job changed to day work. This change literally cut the cost of the project in half for Elizabethtown Gas (ETG) and avoided endless complaints from residents.

Tomas Martinez and his crew were put in charge of this sensitive project. They came through as usual, and kept all of Menton's promises to the State.

One complaint made its way to Owner, Frank Evans, regarding notification of homeowners. Evans contacted Jack Silva, Construction Manager, and was immediately informed that each homeowner was given written notice prior to the start of the job. Additionally, all homeowners to be affected on a particular day were contacted, and emergency access was made available



at all times. After 20 minutes of talking with the homeowner, she was satisfied and understood the nature of the work. The next day Jack Silva reported that the homeowner brought all of the men drinks, and at the completion of the job she wrote one of our company's most complimentary letters, now hanging on the wall in Roselle.

The main was completed with the exception of the intersection of Route 28 and Martine Ave., a thoroughfare between a state highway, a county road and the railroad. Mark Daly and Jack Silva designed two alternate construction plans to get through the intersection, and presented them to police, state and local authorities. The group decided upon the plan that required the most traffic control but saved the traffic loops and did not require directional drilling. The plan offered Skoda a timeframe of Friday night and all day Saturday to complete the project. Jack Silva orchestrated his crews flawlessly, not only getting the main installed, but

also finishing two side connections and the permanent paving by 9 am on Saturday with no complaints reported.

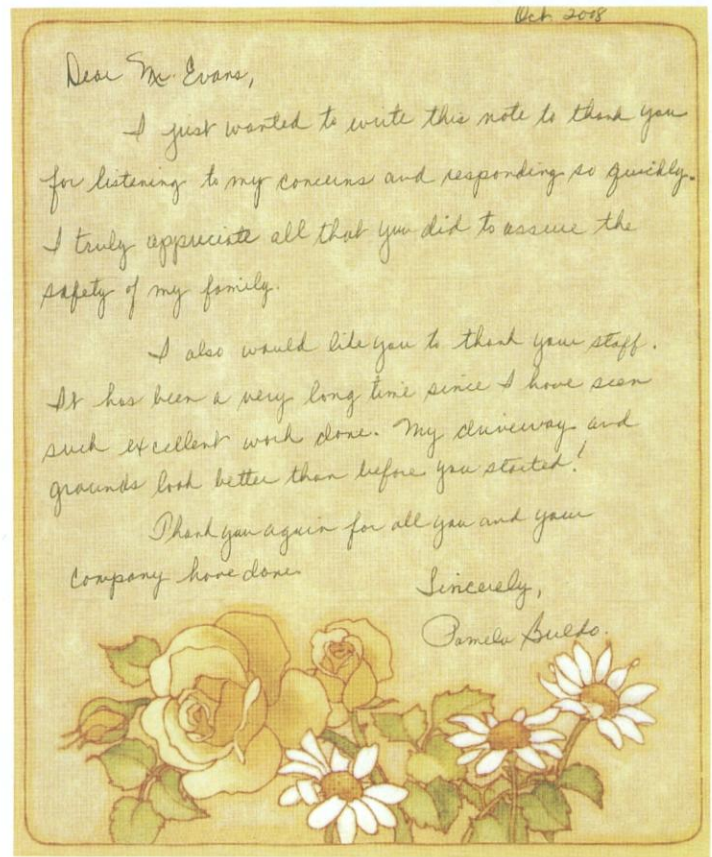
After the completion of the main, it was time for customers to be transferred over to the new pipe. Gary Gregory, Manager of Meters and Regulations, was responsible for setting up appointments with customers. "Converting a customer from low pressure to elevated pressure is not an easy task. It becomes especially difficult when working in confined space, deep basements, and drilling walls of 18" poured concrete for vent lines," commented Gary. Further complicating matters was the sensitive customer base along South Avenue, including a branch of Children's Specialized Hospital, the largest pediatric rehabilitation hospital in the United States. Other customers on South Avenue included two buildings belonging to Chelsea Senior Living housing a broad range of seniors. Also needing to be converted, and providing a host of obstacles, were

a busy restaurant and a supermarket that had been constructed on top of the gas pipe feeding into the building.

Preparations started a month before this portion of the job commenced, and required team work and input from Skoda's construction, public relations and meter and regulation departments. Numerous meetings and phone calls with the hospital and senior center were necessary to ensure that the correct people were informed of the gas shut-off and all that it would entail. Since it was critical that care remain continuous for residents and patients, various arrangements were made to minimize down time. One step that was taken was to overheat all of the buildings to compensate for the loss in temperature during the shut-off. Skoda's knowledge and expertise allowed for the gas to be shut-off for a minimal amount of hours in each building. Our senior pipe fitters, Joe Principato, Greg Cerillo and Gerald Fiyut brought their crews and completed the task with no problems. During the same timeframe, Skoda also set 125 new gas meters.

Unfortunately, the meals at the senior center could not be continued without interruption. Skoda employees offered to bring in pizza and absorb the cost of the food to ensure that the seniors did not miss lunch, however the seniors opted for a road trip to Red Lobster.

Tested on every aspect of Utility Construction, Skoda's efforts paid off and allowed for the complex job to be completed quickly and safely. Fifty years of experience and



attention to detail every day were employed to keep patients, seniors and diners warm, residents sleeping at night and ETG's project delivered for half the price.

