

Triage begins recovery at Miami-Dade

Miami-Dade began the recovery process by surveying the system and, in Tom Segars' words, "practicing triage. We started with the lightest hit part of the system and got the treatment processes back on line in order to declare at least a portion of the system potable. We had power supply problems in the south that kept that system from being declared potable until the local power company could determine the lines were in good enough shape." WASA received some assistance from the military, which provided portable generators to restore power at such critical locations as wellfields. Members of the military were at these locations 24 hours a day throughout the recovery period. In little more than a week's time, WASA repair crews had repaired some 500 service line leaks and 175 main breaks.

In Homestead, where crews were sent out to turn off service at meter boxes, seemingly simple tasks proved frustrating. "We had a maddening time getting our hands on enough T-handle wrenches," reports Rob Brush. In some instances, crews could not find valves, and buildings that had seemed mostly intact were later found to have severe leaks. Homestead, unlike some neighboring utilities, never lost pressure completely. "Our system proper was not in bad shape," says Brush. "Basically, if you had a house, you had water." Because the situation in the community was so chaotic, with some lightly damaged buildings continuously occu-

Ed Davis, director of public works for the city of Sumter, S.C., helped coordinate relief efforts with US Army representatives in the wake of Hurricane Andrew.



NORTH MIAMI BEACH PUBLIC UTILITIES DEPARTMENT

Virtually all of Florida City's utility personnel were either injured in the storm or lost their homes and belongings.

pied and other structures taken over by squatters, the utility decided to close all service accounts and mail deposits to the last known address. At the same time, personnel were checking to see where people were living to ensure that accounts were reenergized as soon as occupancy had been confirmed.

In hard-hit Florida City, Richard Coates explains, crews responded first to broken water mains. Next they surveyed the system block by block. As crews became available, they made door-to-door sweeps, repairing leaks wherever possible, shutting off service to abandoned houses, and discontinuing service to occupied dwellings with bad leaks. At some locations, spigot hookups were attached at the meter so remaining residents would have water. Florida City utility personnel directed teams of workers from the military and from other water facilities to find meters not in obvious locations and make repairs. Gradually the drain on the system was plugged, allowing the water plant to begin the return to normal operations.

New main breaks occur

Even as distribution system repairs were under way, new breaks occurred. When electrical utilities began undertaking large-scale replacement of power poles and military personnel and private contractors started the massive cleanup, the bulldozers and other