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People **BEHIND THE WATER**

Jim Chaba, Crew Foreman, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

The position of Crew Foreman for EPCOR Utilities Inc. in Edmonton, Alberta, is literally an around-the-clock job. For the last twenty years, Jim Chaba and his team have been on call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week to keep the water supply of Edmonton running smooth. “The weather in this part of the country can really be tough on the water infrastructure,” says Jim. “Most people have no idea how much is going on under their feet, and it’s our job to make sure that they don’t have to.”

Water distribution repairs can cover anything from water main breaks to fire hydrants and valve repairs. Much like firemen, Jim and his team receive a call when a break occurs and immediately rush to the scene, locate the problem, and get to work fixing it before it worsens. The biggest challenge as Crew Foreman, and the part of his job Jim still enjoys most, is locating the problem quickly so that it can be fixed without the system skipping a beat. “I think of it as a hunt, a game that we have to win quickly.”

Although their work often involves specific, isolated repairs, Jim and team train for more drastic scenarios, such as natural disasters. In 1987, when a tornado came through Edmonton, causing extensive damage, Jim and his team were on the front lines with emergency responders all over the city, ensuring the safety and well being of Edmonton residents. “This job demands a person who can handle adverse, even dangerous, weather conditions and definitely doesn’t mind getting their hands dirty,” says Jim. “It’s difficult work, but tough work is also quite rewarding.”



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