

2010 Most Valuable Professional: Murphy Pipeline's Andy Mayer

by Traci Read Senior Editor

Andrew J. Mayer, founder and president of Murphy Pipeline Contractors Inc. (MPC), has earned the distinction of this year's Most Valuable Professional Award sponsored by the Underground Construction Technology Association and *Underground Construction* magazine. The award was bestowed to Mayer for his outstanding contributions to the underground infrastructure industry at the annual Underground Construction Technology International Conference & Exhibition held in Tampa, FL, in January.

Jacksonville, FL-based MPC is recognized as one of the world's leading installers of pre-chlorinated water pipe via pipe bursting. The company has received the American Public Works Association Project of the Year award and various other performance and safety awards.

Mayer is one of the most active and enthusiastic promoters of installing pre-chlorinated pipe via bursting (pipe that is chlorinated and pressure-tested above ground before installation). He has served as a consultant on major projects throughout North America. He also works as an advisor to the American Water Works Association (AWWA), EPA, state regulatory agencies and trenchless equipment manufacturers in the education, development and advancement of the pre-chlorinated pipebursting process. Mayer received the Chairman's Award from the AWWA in 2002 recognizing his work in bringing pre-chlorinated pipe bursting to North America.

Roots

A native of London, Mayer traces his roots back to British Gas when the technologies of pipebursting and Swagelining were first developed. He began his career at age 16 as an apprentice with British Gas and is a graduate of Gloucester Technical College, Gloucester, England.

Mayer's 28-year career in trenchless technology has covered many positions in the pipeline industry including team leader, trade foreman, construction engineer and consultant. An avid outdoorsman, the prospect of working outside lured Mayer to a career in pipeline construction.

"When I began working as an apprentice at British Gas, I didn't know exactly what I was getting into," says Mayer. "I just knew that I wanted to work outdoors, not sit in a classroom all day. When I began study-



Top: Mayer (center) accepts the annual MVP Award from (left to right): UCTA Past President Patrick Mann, MVP Committee Chairperson Russ Ford, Mayer, Undergruond Construction Editor Robert Carpenter, UCTA President Terry Meador. **Bottom:** Audience members listen to Mayer's acceptance remarks.

ing the gas infrastructure and how product is produced and shipped to the customer, I became intrigued to learn more. It was an intense four-year program. I learned how to deal with potential leaks, rehabilitation, pressure flows and much more."

For Mayer, it was a natural progression to move into the field of rehabilitation of gas lines to water lines. Building on his knowledge and talents, Mayer founded his first company when he was only 22. As president of AJM Consults & Engineers, the company performed planning, design and pre-construction services related to trenchless technologies applied to pipebursting in Europe.

Widely used in Europe, Mayer was surprised to discover that pipebursting water mains using the pre-chlorination method was still in its infancy in the United States. For more than a decade, contractors in England adopted the practice when the country ran out of underground space to install new pipelines, and have used it to replace nearly every water main since.

Recognizing that the U.S. market was virtually untapped, Mayer moved to Florida in May 2000.

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reflects Mayer. "The United States was the first country to put a man on the moon, develop spy planes that fly so fast they can't be seen and invent the silicon chip. But contractors were still using a 20-ton excavator to install a 6-inch water line down the middle of a road using open-cut construction. A light bulb went off in my head that this country had a need for the kind of technology my company could provide."

By November of that year, the Florida Department of the Environmental Protection Agency had approved the method of pre-chlorination and pipebursting for water mains. Since then, MPC has installed more than 400,000 feet of water main using the pre-chlorinated pipebursting method. In addition, Mayer has served as a consultant on major projects throughout the United States. By working with the AWWA in Florida to spread the word about the benefits of pre-chlorinated pipebursting, Mayer has been able to help Florida water companies understand the method as an acceptable means of water main rehabilitation.

Process highlights

The benefits of installing pre-chlorinated segments of pipe are many according to



Mayer. The trenchless method greatly reduces downtime, is cost efficient for cities that don't have to wait on permitting for new construction – as long as upsizing is no more than two sizes – and is less disruptive than open-cut methods to the surrounding area.

By using this system, the old water, sewage or gas main is shattered into small pieces and pushed laterally into the surrounding earth. The original pipe diameter is replaced or upsized using an expander and the replacement HDPE, PE or PVC pipe is then towed into the new borehole.

Mayer is particularly proud of a project that MPC worked on in Fort Pierce, FL, that required replacing 6-inch cast iron pipes with 6-inch HDPE pipes on approximately 13,000 feet of water main. A crew of six handled the project on Indian River Drive, a scenic state highway, in just eight weeks. This job required special treatment because there were high-end homes with expensive driveways, limited working areas and high traffic. Water quality issues also had to be addressed necessitating filtering to each of the meters.

The crew burst an average of 400 feet of pipe in about two hours each day. The rest of the day, the crew handled restoration work, pre-chlorinating and pre-pressure pipe testing. By noon of each day, the pullback was complete, the pipe was in the launch pit and the bursting equipment was removed.

Mayer says, "We had opposition at first from residents who didn't fully understand how we were going to accomplish the replacement without damaging their property or how long we would be in the area disrupting their lives. But as time progressed and we had gone about 2,000 feet, the homeowners soon realized that we'd solved their water problems. They spread the word to their neighbors who wanted to know how fast we could get to them."

To help mitigate interruptions to residents, Fort Pierce Utilities Authorities notified them about the project and the minor disruptions they would face. Residents also could call a hotline with their questions or concerns. For residents directly affected by the project, an employee notified them about possible disruptions.

When the job was completed, the homeowners showed their appreciation for the crew's efficiency, quality and speed of work by hosting a party.

Education

Mayer observes, "Education is the key. It's such great technology and once communities fully understand, they see how easy it

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is to install pipe and get customers back in service in a day."

Mayer and his crew go above-and-beyond to educate communities about the value of pre-chlorination pipebursting. Through education and project design, most regulatory authorities and community officials understand that everything MPC does follows AWWA, Plastics Pipe Institute, ASTM and NSF standards. Once the education phase is complete, a feasibility study is done for the city.

To spread the word through education, Mayer also serves as a committee member on the International Pipe Bursting Association (IPBA), a division of NASSCO.

"There are so many cities and communities that have never heard about trenchless technologies," says Mayer. "They think the only way to install pipes is through conventional methods using backhoes and digging up streets. The IPBA is a great vehicle for

these communities to become educated in the use of pipebursting and the other available trenchless technologies."

Mayer believes the trenchless technology industry is gaining speed in the new economy.

"With the new green environmental issues and the need for jobs to be performed faster and cheaper, the benefits of trenchless – everything from directional drilling to CIPP to pipebursting – are obvious. These technologies will reap the benefits of the new stimulus bill because they can be performed three times faster at a cost savings to the cities."

Besides education, Mayer believes in leading by example when it comes to pleasing area residents. "We're a problem-solving company that takes pride in the quality of our work," explains Mayer. "No question is too difficult for us to meet. I ask my crew to approach each job as if the house were their own. When a job is complete, they need to leave the house in the shape they would want it if it were their house."

In his acceptance speech, Mayer wasn't one to boast of his achievements, he preferred to recognize the achievements of his staff and the work they've done to promote pre-chlorinated pipebursting to the North American underground construction market. Todd Grafenauer, director of business development and Bill Huffman, director of engineering, were at the luncheon to hear words of praise directed their way as were many of his crew who were there to support Mayer.

"I may have brought this technology to the attention of North America, but my team is a key element of this organization," expresses Mayer. "If you surround yourself with the right people, then you get what you expect – a good job, well done. We all reap the benefits, not only now, but for the future of our business."

Humbled by his selection as the 2010 MVP, Mayer continues, "It's a tremendous honor and a surprise to receive this award. After knocking on so many doors in North America to promote this particular trenchless technology, I didn't think anyone was paying attention. To realize they are is very rewarding. I consider the MVP award a stepping-stone that will bring attention to this technology as it becomes accepted as a mainstream rehabilitation tool."

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