

Going the Extra Mile

RIDGID

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El Paso Natural Gas Central Maintenance Division Increases Efficiency, Doubles Marked Miles with RIDGID SeekTech SR-20 Utility Line Locator.

The El Paso Corporation is an industry-leading provider of natural gas and related energy products that is committed to both safety and the environment, while delivering natural gas from remote production sites to growing population areas. To do so, El Paso's Pipeline Group relies on a pipeline system that navigates the hills in New England, deserts in the Southwest, marshlands in the Deep South, the Rocky Mountains and the plains of Texas.

The Pipeline Group is responsible for transporting more than a quarter of the country's natural gas. They also maintain the company's 42,000-mile interstate natural gas pipeline system. This is a daily task taken on—in part—by the El Paso Natural Gas Central Maintenance Division located in Phoenix, AZ.

"The RIDGID locator's mapping display is extremely helpful in the field, It allows us to crisscross pipelines—it automatically switches lines as you leave one pipeline area and enter another pipeline area, meaning we can move from one line to the next very quickly."

There, crew lead Allen King heads a five-man crew on day-to-day maintenance and construction projects in the Tucson division which targets the vast area from Arizona to California. King and his crew are tasked with keeping the company's commitment to pipeline safety by taking measures to ensure the pipeline's "safe operation and physical integrity."

Locating New Technology

The crew is assigned a variety of projects to maintain the pipeline. These tasks include excavating pipelines for repairs or inspections, hooking up new meter stations and right-of-way work, like grading pipeline roads and removing trees. King and his crew rely on underground pipe and cable line locators to detect pipelines that range from 4 inches to 42 inches in diameter.

Although a variety of locators were already in use, El Paso was introduced to RIDGID locating equipment at the CGA Excavation Safety Conference & Expo. RIDGID provides a full line of locators and transmitters that provide fast and accurate locating of buried utilities, including electric, water, gas, oil, telecom, cable and sewer.

The company added the RIDGID SeekTech SR-20 utility line locator to its existing equipment and started utilizing it on a myriad of pipeline projects. "Incorporating the RIDGID locating equipment into our day-to-day activities was an easy transition," said King. "RIDGID came out to train our 20 technicians on the basic principles of line locating, the features of the SR-20 and how to use them."

The RIDGID SR-20 locator uses a combination of omni-directional antennas, an easy-to-read mapping display and state-of-the-art processing to provide users with more information to effectively and easily locate underground utilities. In addition to tracing transmitted frequencies, the SR-20 offers advanced passive modes that allow users to search for other metallic lines that might be present.

To accurately guide the user, the mapping display shows the target line direction and changes in direction as they occur, left-right guidance arrows, signal strength and a proximity number that increases as the distance to the target decreases.



"The RIDGID locator's mapping display is extremely helpful in the field," said Sam Mora, pipeline specialist in the El Paso Natural Gas Central Maintenance Division. "It allows us to crisscross pipelines. It automati-

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cally switches lines as you leave one pipeline area and enter another pipeline area, meaning we can move from one line to the next very quickly.”

The RIDGID locators have become a great fit in many situations. “The RIDGID locator provides us with a variety of helpful features not available on some of our other equipment, such as a screen display of the pipe being located, the direction of the pipeline and better range when using the induction mode without a transmitter.”

Moving Forward

The RIDGID SR-20 locator has the ability to detect cathodic protection (CP), a common

pipeline technique to make metal surfaces a cathode of an electrochemical cell to control corrosion. This can be done without a transmitter, making the RIDGID locator ideal for specific situations where it is more efficient to use a locator without a transmitter.

“The pipelines have CP on them from end to end so when we are locating and have 10 miles of right of way, we can do the job without ever setting up the transmitter on the pipeline. This enables us to do our job quickly and smoothly,” said King.

In the past, the crew would need to rely on a receiver and transmitter to complete these projects. “After setting up the system, we would travel 400 to 500 feet and then stop to return and pick up the transmitter. Then,

we’d start the process over again from where we left off,” said Mora. “It was a time-consuming process.”

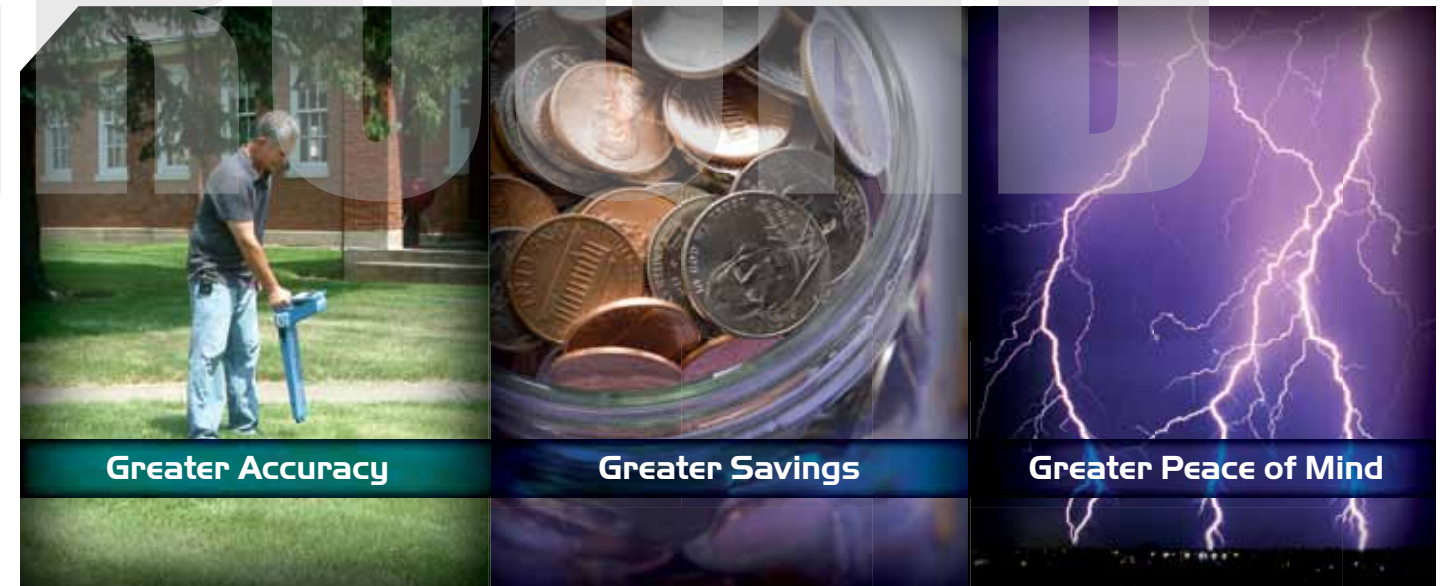
With the SR-20 the process of picking up and moving a transmitter has been eliminated, allowing the pipeline specialists to almost double the number miles they can mark in a day. “The RIDGID SR-20 locator helps us to work in a more efficient way allowing us to be more productive,” said Mora. “We can continue working as long as we have the supplies we need. We don’t have to delay a job by going backwards—with the RIDGID SR-20, we keep moving forward.” **UF**

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