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Broken water main creates Newport Beach sinkhole [Updated]

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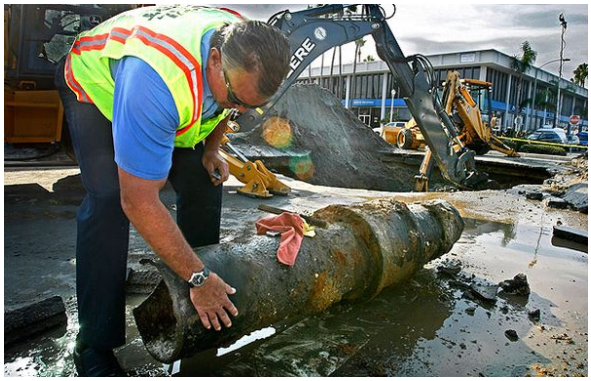

A 90-square-foot section of road collapsed in Newport Beach early this morning after a water main broke in a commercial neighborhood, covering a block-long area with as much as 6 inches of water.

City utility crews were notified about the problem along Via Lido, near Newport Boulevard, at about 1 a.m., but when they shut off the broken 20-inch pipeline, the road began caving in, said Tara Finnegan, spokeswoman for the city of Newport Beach.

[**Updated at 1:45 a.m.:** City utilities director George Murdoch said the break occurred in a connector between the 20-inch pipe and a 12-inch pipe. The connector and parts of both pipes will be replaced, he said.]

The sinkhole grew to 10 feet deep, but no businesses or homes were flooded, and only one commercial site was without water.

Both westbound lanes of Via Lido were closed, but crews planned to temporarily repair the line and reopen one lane by tonight, Finnegan said. Full repair is expected by Thursday, she said.

The Greater Los Angeles area has been plagued by frequent water main breaks, including about 35 major blowouts since Sept. 1.

-- Raja Abdulrahim

Photo: Mike Kraus, utilities crew chief for the city of Newport Beach, inspects a piece of cast iron water pipe that failed near the intersection of Via Lido and Newport Boulevard. Kraus says the 1920s era pipe burst at about 1a.m., creating a 30-yard wide sinkhole. Credit: Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times