

Highridge Water Authority was recently sued by Blairsville Municipal Authority.

BMA claims that the removal of a Highridge hydrant in the borough of Blairsville will harm the "health, safety, and welfare of its residents". Highridge claims the hydrant's use by Blairsville fireman during a January fire in downtown Blairsville created a tremendous hardship for Highridge because over 200 customers in Derry Township had no water while another 1,000 experienced low water pressure and dirty water in Burrell and Derry Townships for days and weeks following the blaze.

The volume of water used both to assist fireman and afterward flush Highridge water mains to remove turbulence totaled over 750,000 gallons. During the entire fire Blairsville residents never experienced loss of service because firemen were ordered not to use any of Blairsville's 100 hydrants. Consequently, only water from Highridge's system was used according to fire fighters.

We believe Highridge's customers are every bit as important to us as BMA's customers are to Blairsville. Those we serve shouldn't be made to sacrifice to fight fires in Blairsville if BMA can't or is unwilling to provide its own customers with fire protection.

Efforts at reaching an agreement to this end or reimbursing Highridge in the event of a reoccurrence went nowhere. In mid-August, Highridge removed the hydrant in downtown Blairsville.

Indiana County Common Pleas Court Judge William Martin, during a preliminary hearing, recognized the risk to Highridge customers if another emergency arose and directed attorneys to draft an injunction order that includes contingency plans to maintain service to Highridge customers.