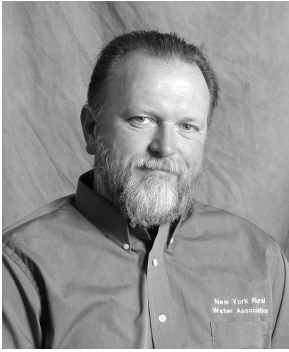


# Winter Is Behind Us, BUT.....

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**W**ell somehow we have done it again! Done what you say, muddled through another treacherous New York winter! Now is the time to focus on what we did right, and what we did wrong. Dealing with winter conditions is never easy but there are several maintenance items that can be accomplished in the fall of the year that can make

dealing with Mother Nature a little easier. I have to believe that my number one complaint would be Valve Boxes. There are times, during the winter months here in New York, when removing valve box covers can only be accomplished with help from the Lord himself. Here are a few of the situations I have encountered with these devils:

- 1 - Frozen dirt between cover & box creates a vise-like grip.
- 2 - Valve top rusted to valve box.
- 3 - Valve box mangled beyond belief.
- 4 - Valve box paved over.
- 5 - Once cover is removed, box filled to top with ice.
- 6 - Once cover is removed, box filled to top with frozen dirt & sand.
- 7 - Valve box not centered on Valve nut.

These are just a few of my *favorite things!*

It does not have to be like this; we can make a point of addressing these valve box problems in the fall and avoid the needless pain and suffering caused by these common maladies. First of all there is the cover itself, a nice thick coat of commonly used axle grease on the socket, and then again, on the outside of the cover works for me. Yes, it is messy to open and at -20 the grease has a caulk like quality, but you can get the cover off! Some guys use plastic bags wrapped around the cover, this also works well. Paint the cover blue, this can help to distinguish the cover from the frozen pavement around it. If the top of the box is broken, get a repair section from your supplier, and get it installed. I see a lot of those things lying around your shops. If have completed paving projects over the summer, go around and check to make sure all your valve boxes are accessible. It is a lot easier to chisel out the pavement when it is +40F, than when the mercury drops below the -20F mark. Pull the covers and make sure you can get a wrench on the Valve nut. If the box is full of dirt, clam it out or use a shop-vac or sewer truck. Buy some of those foam

inserts that prevent water and sand from accumulating in the Valve Box. If your valves are located off the road, make sure the dirt and sod is off the cover and try to stake them if possible. Two inches of frozen sod is like IRON at -20F. If you have curbing, paint a blue slash parallel to the valve on the curb, this is useful when the snow is waste deep. I like to see Hydrants kept clear of snow and ice. If manpower is an issue, try to enlist the help of the Fire Dept. or some community service organizations (Boy Scouts, Rotary, Optimist, Masons). Some systems in my area utilize 55 gallon barrels over their hydrants to keep them clear, the blue plastic ones absorb the sunlight and do not seem to freeze down as bad.

Some tools you may consider getting together and ready for next season:

- 1 - One of those weed-burning torches that operates off a 20lb. cylinder.
- 2 - A set of Valve-cover tongs.
- 3 - Several types of chisels and pry-bars.
- 4 - A self-igniting Burnz-a-matic torch.
- 5 - A large Ball-peen or 3lb. hammer.
- 6 - For those of you with larger equipment budgets, a gas powered hammer-drill w/chisel bit.
- 7 - And last but-not-least; look in the Pollard catalog for the Magikist Service Line thawer, about \$2000.00, but well worth the money for those of you who have continuous problems with frozen service lines.

These are just a few tips to help improve winter operations. Think ahead and prepare for next year, Old Man Winter is just 6 months away. 💧

