



TIME TO REFLECT ON THE WINTER OF 2014

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By the time you get to read this article we will have negotiated the Winter of 2014 and the trials and tribulations that we most assuredly experienced. Now is the time to ask ourselves what we could have done differently to make the treacherous winter working conditions a little more tolerable.

One of the items that always seems to top my list are valve boxes that are filled to the top with sand, gravel, rocks, etc. When frozen solid, this debris is almost impossible to remove during the winter months. Not so once the weather warms our state to tolerable levels. Boxes that were plugged need to be cleaned out and foam plugs inserted to keep it from happening again. Also tops on my list are valve boxes that need to be centered, or straightened, to allow for the valve wrench to be easily placed on the operating nut. Winter weather means snowplows and snowplows mean busted valve boxes, curb-stops, and manhole covers. Don't put off the repair of these items. We always seem to procrastinate when it comes to fixing these items.

When Spring does arrive, it is time to grab a notebook and drive around town jotting down winter damage and getting those items on a list of necessary repairs to be completed before the next years raging weather is upon us. Another item that needs addressing during good weather are line valves that fail to operate properly. Whether the valve itself is broken or maybe just fails to fully close, now is the time to repair, exercise, or replace it. Many times over the years I have been called to assist a system with a water main break and we have been unable to shut down the main with the closest valve. This results in an increase in the number of customers affected by the main break and the number of customers without water during the time frame of the repair work.

Spring and summer are also a time when temporary repairs to the roadway should be revisited and repaired properly with the required lightweight concrete and asphalt hot mix. Care should be taken to sawcut ragged pavement edges to incorporate the best repair possible. Once the weather clears it is also a good time to inspect any deficiencies with your fire hydrants. This would include such items as missing caps, bolts, etc. as well the removal of hydrant markers. Hydrants should be inspected for cracks and damage caused by snowplows or frost. After your spring hydrant flush is a good time to make sure hydrant weeps are working properly to drain the hydrant barrel after each use. You can also use an ear piece or electronic leak detection equipment to

determine if the hydrant is leaking at the hydrant seat after flushing or hydrant use. If severe corrosion to the exterior of the hydrant has occurred, it may be a good use of summer help, community service individuals, or the Boy Scouts to wire brush, scrape, and apply a new coat of paint. Hydrants that use lubricants (oil and grease) should be lubricated at this time. This is also a good time to expose the guard valve cover and check to see if the guard valve is centered and operational.

While all these items are sometimes difficult to fit into an already busy and hectic schedule, attention to them at this time will most assuredly result in your enhanced ability to deliver "Quality on Tap"! 💧💧