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Summer....The Perfect Time to Find That Valve

Well, summer is finally here! The wonderful warm, sunny weather was worth the wait! This is the perfect time for starting a “locating project.” How about starting or expanding a valve locating and water line mapping project. Many water systems know where the majority of their water valves are, but how about all the water main valves?



Not knowing the location of all of the main valves could

cost an enormous amount of money if a lot of water is lost during a water break. The cost is not simply figured in dollars and cents, but also the cost of valuable time lost during an emergency (a water reservoir is draining due to a water leak or something similar). Valves are there for a good reason, but if they cannot be located or are no longer in a good operating condition, the bottom line is that they are not accomplishing their purpose.

To get a jump start on this project: check out all of your old maps and label your valves with numbers or letters. Go out in the field and locate each one. Exercise the valve; next document that it is or is not in good working condition.

Most water systems would be hard pressed to say that they know where all their valves are; others would be happy to know where half of them are!

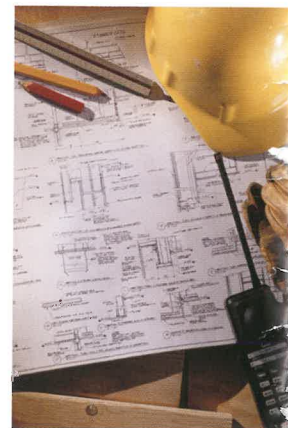
Locate the most important valves first. The most important valves are the ones that control the system, especially by the water treatment plant and the valves at the water tower. Other important valves could be located around the hospitals, clinics, schools, industrial parks, and at busy intersections. Once the valves have been located, mark them,

take pictures, document and/or record them. Use a GPS and mark them with a marker or a flag.

Being able to locate valves is crucial during any time of the year, but especially during emergencies. Remember, we live in Minnesota and it is much harder to find and locate any valve in the winter months under the snow.

If there are valves that still need locating, review the maps and then start searching for the lost valves. You will need a line tracer, a metal detector, a shovel, and a pick. Have some blue paint to paint the box lid when finished. Don't forget about safety in the field. Wear your safety vests and if needed have a flag crew. Once you locate the valves, operate the valves to open and close the valve one full cycle. This may take several cycles but work the valve open and shut slowly.

Document the location of the valves, their condition, and how many valve rotations it takes to fully open and close them. Draw a map of the location by measuring the distance from a fixed object. Do not lose it once you find the valve.



Just getting started can be the largest hurdle. Water systems will look at the entire system and the number of valves with an overwhelming sense that this is an impossible task to accomplish. In reality, a modest beginning can achieve immediate positive results. With good planning and execution, the valve locating program will go smoothly. Mapping, locating, record keeping, and planning are all part of the job. In the event that an emergency happens, being prepared can save you valuable time and money.

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