





ARE YOU READY FOR

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WINTER?

As the seasons change from autumn to winter, water system personnel face many challenges. From leaks to frozen lines and meters, this is the time of year when the freeze and thaw cycles make our systems crackle with joy. You need to be ready for everything you can imagine—and then some.

In this article I will concentrate on the water problems you will likely confront when cold weather hits. The problems brought on, and aggravated by, winter can be handled much better if you are ready.

Stock Supplies, Service Equipment

To start, be sure that you have the inventory you need: from meters, to meter lids, to clamps, and many other parts. You must be sure that your equipment is ready for cold weather and the bad roads. The tires on your trucks or backhoes have to be in good shape, and in some areas you better have those tire chains ready.

Valves should be located, raised (if needed), and exercised (if possible) to insure that they will work when they are needed. Hydrants must be flushed, greased, and checked to be sure they are draining properly. Locks should be lubed, siliconed, or otherwise protected from moisture to allow them to operate more easily in the freezing weather.

Booster stations are something else you must examine: check the heaters and set thermostats. It's a good idea to seal any holes in the building or pit walls, if possible, as this will save heating costs. Be sure the drains or sump pumps are working properly also.

Service the motors and pumps because they will be worked harder than normal when you have main breaks. Do you have spare parts for all of them? Have you checked your generators and the hook-ups? If you don't have generators, have you checked about renting them locally? Power outages, downed lines, impassable roads, and telemetry outages, are all things we might be forced to deal with. You need to do everything that you can think of to prepare for the winter season.

Don't Forget the Workers

Another thing to consider is your personnel. Do you have enough people to meet the challenges you expect? What about the ones that might come as a surprise? Do workers have the equipment they will need? What about warm boots or waders, or warm waterproof gloves? Turbo heaters are a must in some areas when the temperatures fall, as well as small generators and emergency lighting, as the daylight hours get shorter.

Good flashlights and fresh batteries are often worth their weight in gold when you need to get information from a pump ID plate, inspect the pipe's condition, fuel levels, or many other things. How about your trash or mud pumps used for dewatering the leaks you dig up? Are they serviced and ready?

Fuel can also pose a problem. If the power goes out and stays out, do you have enough on hand to keep your equipment running for at least a day or two? Gas and diesel will both deteriorate over time. Store a few cans of fuel and rotate them to keep them fresh. Remember that the other departments might come looking to borrow if you have some. Be prepared to share.

Preparation Now Will Pay Later

Some areas have had several fairly mild winters in recent history, but who knows when that will change. Prepare for the worst that you can imagine. As the old saying goes, "it is better to have and not need than to need and not have." No matter how hard you try, there will always be something that you can't predict. The bottom line is you will have a much easier time this winter with some forethought and preparation.

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COLD WEATHER CHECKLIST

Is your system ready for cold weather? Tackle these five activities and rest easier when winter hits.



Source: West Virginia Rural Water Association