

Stolen Assemblies

What Can Be Done?

Spring has sprung! It is time once again to get the irrigation system fired up for the season. But when you fire up the system be sure to check that you actually have a backflow preventer installed on the system. Thefts of the assemblies are happening at an alarming rate.

The rise in the scrap value of metals is believed to have driven up the incidents of missing backflow preventers, copper pipe, electrical wire, aluminum containers or enclosures and anything else made of these metals that are readily - and sometimes not so readily - available.



We are all making recommendations to our customers that own the irrigation systems about how to protect the backflow prevention assemblies. Many are using enclosures. If the thief knows what is inside the enclosure it may do no good. Many enclosures are being destroyed or stolen along with the backflow prevention assembly. Sometimes the thief just waits for the "crop" to grow back. One restaurant has had their backflow prevention assembly stolen three times. There won't be any way to prevent the thief from knowing when it gets replaced again.

Perhaps the best way to prevent the thefts is to remove the temptation. This could occur in several ways. First, we could look at moving all the irrigation assemblies and installing them in buildings. Of course this would be impractical on several levels.



Or we could remove the irrigation assemblies all together. Unless we did away with the irrigation systems themselves, this approach would put most, if not all, of the owners out of compliance with the cross-connection control programs instituted by the water systems and would probably put the water systems out of compliance with the Colorado Primary Drinking Water Regulations.

Another way to remove the temptation is to make the value of the scrapped metal too low to be worthwhile. To actually reduce the monetary value of the metals will require changes in the status of the U.S., or perhaps the world economy. This is not something the CBPA can accomplish, at least not in the short run.



But we can help. The CBPA has developed a list of missing backflow preventers and other items used in our industry, such as test kits. If we can actually get people to give us the information so we can post the missing assemblies on the Website; if we can actually keep the list up to date; if we can get the scrap dealers informed and checking the list when they receive assemblies; if we can assist in the apprehension of a few of the people trying to turn stolen assemblies into cash; then perhaps the "value" of the stolen assemblies will go down. It won't be worth it to steal them and go to prison.



The CBPA Website will soon have this list available. If you know of anyone that has had their backflow prevention assembly stolen, please urge them to fill out the form on the Website at www.backflow.org.

Only the make, model, size and serial number will be posted. Should a scrap dealer discover an assembly with one of these serial numbers they should contact law enforcement authorities. We will only pass on the contact information about the assembly to the law enforcement authorities