

 **INFRAMARK**  
**CUSTOMER FIRST NEWSLETTER**  
NOVEMBER 2018

## WINTERIZING - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### THE WINTER CHALLENGE

It is hard to believe that another winter is approaching. Back in January, specifically, January 16<sup>th</sup> through the 18<sup>th</sup>, we had the coldest temperatures in almost thirty years. We responded to hundreds of calls due to broken pipes, outside faucets and backflow preventers. In all of the districts we operate, which encompasses about 365 facilities, 16 of those facilities had some type of damage due to freezing conditions. The most frequent issues were power and sensor problems.

While the Houston metropolitan area does not get a lot of freezing temperatures, a hard freeze, which are temperatures under 30 degrees for over eight hours, can freeze the water in exposed lines and irrigation backflow preventers. As the water freezes, it expands. When the freeze ends, the result can be broken pipes, no water and a big repair bill plus the cost for the wasted water. Not only is it costly to repair your pipes, but the cost and aggravation to replace your furniture, carpets and other possessions is even higher.

Your water plant and wastewater treatment plants are no different than your home when it comes to protecting vital components, but a plant failure has much higher consequences. We want you to know that Inframark is ready for a freeze and want you to be prepared as well. In this issue of Customer First, we want to share some winterizing tips for your home and let you know how we prepare your facilities.

### PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR A FREEZE

1. All garden hoses should be disconnected from the outside spigots. If you forget and do not drain them, do not move them during freezing temperatures. They may be brittle and crack.
2. All exposed water pipes should be wrapped or covered and then taped. Most home improvement stores have tape, foam wrapping and other products for this purpose. Get there early because these supplies usually sell out when a hard freeze is coming.
3. Wrap pipes in the attic especially if they are under an eave leading into the house. While they are not exposed to the outside, they can freeze quickly.
4. All lids on your water meter boxes should be securely closed to keep freezing winds out.
5. If you have an irrigation system, turn off the water to the system at your backflow preventer and then drain the system so your irrigation pipes and sprinkler heads are not damaged.

### PREPARING YOUR FACILITIES FOR A FREEZE

#### THE FREEZE AUDIT

Inframark prepares for the possibility of a hard freeze in the fall with Freeze Protection Audits (FPA). We look at the most vulnerable components of the system: all valves, sensor



lines, chemical feed solution lines, backflow preventers and small diameter water lines. Elevated exposed lines, where air can circulate over and around them, are especially vulnerable. These are just some, but not all of the components inspected.

We note on an audit form the status of all applicable components such as the condition of protective wrapping from the previous year and what needs to be repaired or replaced. The form is signed by the operator and double checked by a manager. We also look to see if any new valves or exposed piping has been installed since the last audit. The audits are then reviewed and materials ordered to repair, replace or install new protection.

### WHAT WE DO

Since water plants and waste water treatment plants may differ from site to site, we use a diverse arsenal of freeze protection techniques for each facility depending on what is needed. Fiberglass batts and industrial thickness plastic and vinyl tape are keys to winterizing. We also utilize, when necessary, a variety of other freeze fighting weapons such as spray foam insulation, heat tape, heat lamps and portable heaters.

We winterize the plant in November. After all repairs and new insulation work has been completed, another inspection is done to confirm that all components exposed to the elements are ready for a hard freeze.

We will be ready for a freeze and we hope that you are as well.



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