

News & Updates from
Des Moines Water Works
NOVEMBER 2018

H₂O LINE

THINK DOWNSTREAM

Protecting Our Water Supply

Des Moines Water Works (DMWW) is committed to providing safe drinking water to our customers. To do so, DMWW manages an active Cross-Connection Control program to meet state and local plumbing codes. This proactive approach is designed to prevent the possible contamination of the public water supply through backflow from customers' facilities.

What is *cross-connection*?

An actual or potential connection between the public drinking water supply and a customer's plumbing system that makes it possible for used water, pollutants, or contaminants to enter the public drinking water supply.

How can a cross-connection be harmful?

A pollutant or contaminant that enters the drinking water supply through a cross-connection can cause illness and spread of disease.

An example of a cross-connection that may be present at your home would be a hose-end sprayer used to apply lawn chemicals.



Problem

If the pressure in the water main drops, the chemicals in the hose-end sprayer could be siphoned into the home and public drinking water supply.

Solution

This situation is easily remedied by installing a self-draining vacuum

breaker onto the faucet. Hose bib vacuum breakers are easy to install and readily available at your local hardware store.

What is *backflow*?

The undesirable reverse flow of used water contaminants or pollutants into the public drinking water supply as a result of a cross-connection. Backflow can occur through backpressure or backsiphonage.

What is *backpressure*?

Backflow caused by water pressure in a facility that is higher than the pressure of the public drinking water supply. This may be caused by pumps, boilers, gravity or other sources of pressure.

Problem

The chemically treated boiler water could backflow through an open or defective valve into the building's plumbing system due to the boiler system pressure being higher (80 lbs.) than the supply pressure (60 lbs.)

Solution

Installation of a backflow preventer on the water line at the point where it connects to the boiler. This type of installation is referred to as "isolation."

What is *backsiphonage*?

The reverse flow of used, contaminated or polluted water from a plumbing fixture or device into the public drinking water due to reduced pressure. This can be caused by nearby fire fighting, water main breaks or repairs.

Problem

If the public water supply pressure is reduced, chemicals in a mixing tank can be siphoned back through the water feed line, into the customer's building and the public water main.

Solution

Installation of a backflow preventer on the water service line immediately after the water meter is required. This prevents contaminated water from entering the drinking water supply through backflow. This type of installation is referred to as "containment."

If you have questions about cross-connection and backflow, please contact a licensed plumber or Des Moines Water Works at (515) 283-8775.

2019 Budget and Water Rates

Des Moines Water Works staff has proposed Des Moines Water Works' 2019 calendar year budget, which includes revenue from 2019 rate increases for all service areas. The Board of Water Works Trustees will hold a public hearing for the proposed 2019 budget on Tuesday, November 27, 2018, at 3:30 p.m. at Des Moines Water Works' general office, located at 2201 George Flagg Parkway, in Des Moines.

The Board approved a 7% rate increase for most customers at their October 23 meeting. The 7% water rate increase equates to an additional \$2.33 per month for water charges for a four-person household in Des Moines (using 7,500 gallons a month). The rate increases will result in approximately \$3.3 million of increased water revenue for 2019. New water rates will go into effect April 1, 2019. A complete listing of Des Moines Water Works' 2019 water rate structure can be found at www.dmww.com/about-us/announcements.

The proposed 2019 budget includes \$67.9 million of operating revenue. The proposed 2019 operating expenses are budgeted at \$46 million, an increase of \$2.6 million from 2018, primarily due to increases in labor and benefits, chemicals, and utilities. Capital infrastructure costs are budgeted at \$22.9 million. The 2019 capital budget includes \$8.2 million for water main replacement and \$4.7 million for improvements to water treatment plants and other facilities. In addition to operating and capital expenditures, \$4.3 million will be spent on debt repayment.

The Board of Trustees water rate increases and annual budgets are consistent with greater investment in the water utility's infrastructure and the challenges of producing safe drinking water in a state where surface water pollution is severe.

Winterize Your Home

Cold, winter weather will soon be upon us. Take advantage of fall conditions to do some winterizing around your home. Here are a few tips to help you prevent your pipes from freezing:

- Cover the pipes in your attic, crawl spaces, and unheated garage with pipe insulation, heat tape or heat cables. Make sure you use material safe for pipe insulation. The more insulation you use, the better your pipes will be protected.
- Seal any leaks allowing cold air inside your home with caulk or insulation. Leaks are commonly found around dryer vents, pipes, and electrical wiring. Even a small air leak can cause your pipes to freeze during severely cold weather.
- Disconnect garden hoses and store them indoors during the winter. Cover your outdoor faucets with faucet covers, or wrap them in old rags and cover with plastic. If possible, drain water from pipes leading to outdoor faucets by shutting off the indoor valve.
- On extremely cold nights, open cabinet doors that cover plumbing on extremely cold nights. This lets heat move to areas in your home where pipes are not insulated, such as under sinks.
- Set the thermostat no lower than 55°F (12°C) if you are leaving your home for an extended period of time. Turn off the water and drain your pipes. Fire protection sprinkler systems will deactivate automatically after the water is shut off.



Reminder for Winter Vacationers:

Contact a Des Moines Water Works Customer Service Representative at (515) 283-8700 with your departure and expected return dates. If you plan to leave your water on while you are gone, ask a trusted friend or neighbor to periodically check your home. Also, make sure you leave emergency contact information with that person.