



NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Fernando B. Molina, Tucson Water
(520) 837-2185
(520) 349-0982 cell
Fernando.Molina@tucsonaz.gov

Date: January 9, 2013
TDD: (520) 791-2639

Protect Plumbing, Pipes, Backflow Assemblies; Hard Freeze Predicted

An anticipated multi-morning hard freeze is predicted for the upcoming weekend. Property and business owners should check plumbing, pipes, and especially backflow assemblies that are affected by outdoor temperatures. Tucson Water is implementing its cold weather emergency preparedness plan to prevent disruption to its delivery system.

A backflow assembly ensures that potable water is kept free from harmful contaminants. When a water line is connected to equipment containing a nonpotable substance, this is known as a cross-connection. Contamination may occur when water flows through a cross-connection from a nonpotable source, such as a sprinkler system or heating and cooling units, into the potable water system, a process known as backflow.

“Backflow assemblies are in use throughout our service area,” said Mark Titus, Supervisor for Backflow Prevention and Reclaimed Water at Tucson Water. “An assembly that is damaged by freeze can cost anywhere from \$1,500 to \$4,000 or more to repair.”

Titus estimates that approximately 3,000 backflow assemblies – 10% of the total in service here – were damaged in the two-day major freeze in February 2011. That figure represents the number of permits to replace assemblies in the following 12 months.

“People with backflow assemblies should contact their certified tester for freeze protection methods best suited for the device,” said Titus. This may include an insulation bag, individual wrap, or a device that slightly opens to generate minimal flow of water.

Exposed pipes and plumbing that carry or contain water may freeze in a small area and not have an opportunity to thaw. High temperatures may not surpass 50 degrees and anything in shade all day will not warm significantly. This includes backflow assemblies, irrigation systems, evaporative coolers, and cooling towers. A burst is capable of causing major water damage and high costs for repair and water loss.

Tucson Water will mail its “Winterizing Tips” document and the “What You Should Know About Backflow Prevention” brochure upon request. Call the Public Information and Conservation Office (PICO) at (520) 791-4331, e-mail pico@tucsonaz.gov, or go online to www.tucsonaz.gov/water/winter-prep.

###