

BACKFLOW DEVICE PROTECTION

CPL. JOHNSON TALKS ABOUT BACKFLOW VALVE THEFTS

Since the last week of June, backflow valves 2" and below have been stolen throughout the city. Thieves are shutting off the water supply and removing/cutting off the backflow devices. The majority of the thefts are occurring overnight Friday-Sunday when people are away and the loss of water to the location goes unnoticed through the weekend. The backflows 2" and below are made of brass. After melting down the devices, the brass can be sold to recyclers anywhere from \$1 a pound to \$2.50 a pound in some cities. Plumbers are charging approx. \$800 to replace the valves and will offer devices such as cages to help secure the back flows. Security devices can cost approx. \$850 to purchase and install.

There have been more than 3 dozen back flow thefts since June 27th that have occurred in the following areas:

1100 block of Baker, 3000 block of Pullman, 3100 block of Airway, 3100 block of Airport Loop, 3500 block of Cadillac, 700 block of 16th St, Sunflower/Fuchsia, 1500 block of Corporate, 2900 block of Randolph, 600 block of Baker, 300 block of Enterprise, 1600 block of Babcock, and 1300 block of Sunflower. The cities of Newport Beach, Tustin, and Santa Ana are experiencing similar thefts.

Be aware of people pretending to be workers at businesses, apartment complexes, or areas of the city such as medians or parkways. Thieves will sometimes wear orange vests with no marking, or will pretend to be gardeners in business areas at odd times of the night, perhaps using a leaf blower at 9:30 at night to cover the noise they make as they cut off the valve. Please be alert, if you see anything suspicious call 911.

See the photos for further details.

BRASS BACKFLOW VALVE THEFTS ARE SERIOUS BUSINESS AND EXPENSIVE TO THE VICTIMS

Every water user has a backflow valve to keep the water the user is working with from getting back into the pure water in the main system.

Recently, the thieves have been coming back to see if the valve has been replaced a couple of weeks after the first theft. If it has and the valve has

not been caged or otherwise secured, the thieves steal the valve again. The valve installers charge \$850 to add a security cage. The victim has to choose if he wants to pay \$1600 for the replacement valve and cage or run a very high possibility of needing to pay \$1600 anyway when he has to spend \$800 for a second valve replacement.

Currently this category of thief is also taking other brass valves, usually connected with a larger irrigation system. One of the parts they like is called an AVB (Atmospheric Vacuum Break). If you know any business owner, or building owner (including churches, as these thieves are not particular), please tell them to be alert.

If you have brass valves and parts, at least paint them to not look like shiny brass. The cages pictured seem to be a pretty good deterrent. You can also camouflage them as long as the water district can still get to the valve to test and repair. Some have built and painted a box or structure and then put their street numbers on the structure, as if that were the purpose of the structure. There are also fake rocks large enough to go over these valves.

Now is the time to make a location list of every such valve you have on your property. Each backflow valve has a serial number on an inch long metal plate held to the valve by two screws. If you cannot read that number, call Mesa Water and they can tell you what it is. If a valve is taken, it is very helpful to Mesa Water if you can add that valve serial number to your report.



If you observe a theft in progress, call 911 immediately. If your device is stolen or damaged, Mesa Water encourages you to file a report with the Costa Mesa Police Department by calling (714) 754-5255. For more information about backflow device theft protection, contact Pieter Pijl, Mesa's Cross-Connection Specialist at (949) 631-1291, or visit www.MesaWater.org.





