



## PREPARING FOR WINTER

Joe Redmond | Apprenticeship Trainer

The last thing we all want to think about is another Winter. As operations specialists, this can be either a slow time or a very stressful time depending on how well your system is maintained and how old of a system you are operating. Being prepared is the best defense against the stresses we face.

Winter months are the best times for most of us to catch up on many yearly tasks. We can start gathering our data needed for our annual water quality reports, water withdrawal reports, backflow test results, pesticide reports for those who treat surface water, updating SDS sheets, checking your chemical bulk storage permits and inspection dates, and everyone's favorite.... Budget information for the new year.

Maintenance items at the treatment plant can also start being planned. Greasing pumps, inspecting clarifier basins, filters, and aeration basins. In some treatment plants, an operations specialist will shut down a clarifier unit during the winter due to lower flows. This can be a great time to inspect them and schedule repair work while the unit is off-line. Turbidity meters and scales may need to be calibrated.

The Distribution system can cause immense stress. Winterizing seasonal buildings and sample taps may need to be addressed. Don't forget about taking notes on what fire hydrants do not drain as you are flushing the system, you may need to pump them out before the big freeze. Check the valves in the area. Especially in break prone locations where the valve box may be filled with silt and water. This is very stressful when there is a leak at 2:00 AM and its 20 degrees below zero. Just the simple act of checking a few valves at major intersections can put your mind at ease. If a break occurs, you will know where the valve is and that it should be ready to operate. Make notes about any vacant homes. Has the curb-stops been turned off? Will they be heating the house while residents are in warmer climates for the season?

Do an inventory of repair parts. Make sure you have at least one, preferably two of everything from repair clamps to dressers and pipe. Fire Hydrant collision kits will also come in handy, as well as service line repair parts. Check your tools. Have you lost any over the year? There is always that one tool that you cannot find in an emergency, and it is usually something that you can't buy locally.



By taking the time now, you may be able to rest a little more comfortably this winter. Emergencies happen, it is a matter of fact. Being as prepared as possible is what sets yourself apart from the ones who take the wait and see approach. Why not get ready now and act with confidence, when a break happens instead of running from valve to valve, stressing yourself and your coworkers out while trying to stop a major incident and possible treatment plant shutdown?

Remember, New York Rural Water Association is always here and ready to assist you, but you know your system the best. You have the tools and the knowledge to fix any problem. My motto is "Always be ready!" Take calm quick action, fix the issue, thank your coworkers, and be proud of what you do. While we are out there freezing and playing in the water, everyone else is sleeping warm in their beds, and with excellent planning, they will wake up, take a shower, and never know that you saved the day. That is the difference between being an operator and being a great operations specialist. Good luck and Thank You! 💧💧

