

Crazy Nebraska Weather

By Mike Stanzel, Circuit Rider

It's been another crazy summer again, torrential rains, flooding, extreme heat and humidity. After 4 months of this you might think you would never see cold weather again. I literally had my A/C on Monday and then it was 43 degrees by Thursday. You know what they say about Nebraska, if you don't like the weather just hang around a few days. You guessed it, cold weather is just around the corner and by the time you read this article, it may have already arrived. Once again it's time to batten down the hatches for winter.

There are a few things to keep in mind before the cold weather arrives. Well houses are always a concern. Be sure to check those heaters to make sure they are functioning properly. It's not a bad idea to have two sources of heat. In some well houses you may be using heat lamps as a supplemental heat source. If you use two different sources of heat, I would recommend wiring them into two different electrical circuits. If for some reason a fuse or breaker is tripped on one circuit, the other circuit will hopefully keep the pipes from freezing until your morning rounds.

Now that you have your well houses nice and warm every mouse in the county will try to take up residence there for the winter. Remember if you have a rodent problem, use glue traps or snap traps. Stay away from mouse poison. Mouse poison or any kind of unapproved chemicals are a bad idea in or around wells. If you know where the little critters are getting into the well, use some steel wool to plug their holes. Mice won't chew through steel wool.

Remember those old fire hydrants that didn't want to drain back this fall when you conducted your biannual main flushing? Be sure to check them to see if they are still full of water. You can use a large nut on the end of a light chain to drop down the barrel of the hydrant to determine if they are holding water. If they are, you will want to siphon or pump them dry before they freeze up.

Check those main valve boxes that like to fill with gravel, water or both. Try to get these flushed out before cold weather. A heavyweight plastic

sheet folded up and put under the valve box lid might help keep a lot of dirt and gravel out or Styrofoam mud plugs can also be purchased from your favorite supplier.

Remember the water tower you were trying to keep full last summer? You will probably need to operate it differently this winter. You may want to move your low water setting lower to achieve a longer fill cycle. This will allow the well to run longer and pump more warm water into the tower to help prevent ice build up.

Winter is also a good time to catch up on that dreaded paper work that there is never time for in the summer. In between pushing snow, salting streets, scooping sidewalks, thawing pipes, fixing water main breaks, trying to start equipment in sub zero weather, you will have plenty of time to send out the cross connection control surveys for the tenth time, update your emergency plan, prepare your 2 and 10 year plan, write an operation and maintenance manual and send in your Bacti sample site plan. I think you're starting to get my drift here. If you would like some help with the paper work this winter be sure and give me a call.