

THE IMPORTANCE OF TRACKING WATER PRODUCED OR PUMPED

By Russ Topp, Circuit Rider

By the time you read this article we will be in the heart of winter here in Nebraska. So far this fall we have had relatively mild weather. I hope it continues.

It is always a good idea to record the water produced or water pumped at each of your wells on a daily basis, but it's extremely important during freezing weather. We get called several times each winter from water systems losing a substantial amount of water. It is much easier to determine what kind of leak we are looking for if we have the daily pumping records. For example, if you are losing around 45,000 gallons a day that figures out to be about 30 gallons per minute. Usually this will be a service line break. Often you will see this after a cold spell and then a warm up. Typically you will find an abandoned or vacant house that had not been properly winterized. The pipes freeze and then after the weather warms up, it starts to flow. I once found a leak in a vacant home that had over 3 million gallons of water through the meter. The basement was full of water, as well as, a cistern just behind the house. I have reviewed records in the past and you could tell exactly the date a line broke. On one occasion you could see two different service line breaks and on the day they broke! Of course a larger water loss would most likely be a water main break. Typically, main breaks surface but we have found a lot of breaks that went to a storm drain or the sanitary sewer. Don't forget to check the wells that are on emergency use. These wells have live water lines in them and if you lose the heat and the lines freeze you're in for a big water leak.

That brings up another important point, wastewater records. The inflow to the wastewater plant, lagoon or even a lift station can tell if the water has made its way to the sanitary sewer. If all else fails you can start popping manhole covers and see where there is an unusual amount of clear water. This narrows down the search.

As you can see daily records are invaluable when it comes time to finding a water leak.