Preventative Well Maintenance

By Russ Topp

Once again it is winter time here in Nebraska. As I write this article the ground outside is covered in snow, and the weather man says we may get another storm this weekend. I guess we can use the moisture. I'm sure most of you are already getting sick of plowing it, and it's still early. In the past I have written articles about getting caught up on paper work when the weather is bad. That's still a good idea. You just never know when that state guy might show up. Preventative maintenance is something else that can be done in the winter when you're not pushing snow or scooping walks.

Several of the municipal water well drillers offer an annual well maintenance program for a very reasonable price. I guess it keeps their technicians busy in the winter months when drilling slows down. In my opinion, this is a very valuable service. After the maintenance has been done they send you a report on their findings. I would highly recommend sharing this report with the village board. The technicians check things like wire to water efficiency. They can tell if the motor and pump are operating efficiently. This alone is very important information. There is no reason to be spending more on electricity than necessary. Unless you have the proper equipment this would be difficult to calculate. If the motor or pump is starting to go out, you definitely want to be saving some money back for that. They also check the accuracy of the master meter. This is important when figuring water loss. I have been to several systems that thought they had a high water loss, and after looking at the well maintenance report, we discovered the master meter was not accurate. Some have been off as much as 20 percent. Draw downs are performed and tracked with this service. Over a period of years they will let you know if the screens are starting to plug. Acidizing the well screen may be necessary, especially if you have an iron and manganese problem. This service also includes things like changing the oil on the motor of a line shaft turbine well. They will also give you a heads up if the line shaft bearings are starting to where.

What does all this add up to? Preventative well maintenance; it gives the system time to budget for a major repair. More importantly if repairs are needed you can schedule for a shut down. Many systems can't afford to shut down a large capacity well in the middle of August. Just as well get that well operating at peak performance for next summer this winter.