

# WINTER IS RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER

## By Russ Topp, Circuit Rider

I wasn't sure summer would ever end this year. With the hot weather throughout this summer you might think you would never see cold weather again. 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. If you are lucky enough to have a SCADA system that alerts you when the temperature drops in the well house make sure it is functioning properly.

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 house, 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. Most structure fires happen in the coldest weather. Make sure your hydrants are functioning properly or bag them if they are not.

Check those main valve boxes that like to fill with gravel, water or both. Try to get them flushed out before cold weather. Styrofoam valve box plugs are inexpensive and seem to work well to keep gravel out of the boxes.

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 and emergency contact list.

If you need help cleaning up your records this winter let me know I would be happy to help.