B U R K E L L P L U M B I N G, INC.
FIRE PROTECTION
2000 Bridgeway, P.O. Box 1384, Sausalito, California 94966
Tel. 415-332-3091 Fax 415-332-6461

California License #417360

Underground Single Detector Check Valve:

To our customers who have buried detector check valves on their fire lines. Starting in 2010 NFPA 25 (National Fire Protection Agency fire sprinklers inspection procedures) requires the internal inspection of these valves (every five years). Note: MMWD has procedures that are also required. Depending on which option is chosen/required there are additional MMWD fees. There are many variables/procedures that are necessary before a budget/fixed price can be given. These valves can be located on public property (sidewalks) or private property. If the detector check valve is on public property a encroachment permit is necessary from your city. The first step is to expose the valve. Since these valves can be located with other public utilities Underground Service Alert (USA) will need to be notified and mark other public utilities (PGE, cable, etc). In public areas pedestrian/traffic control can be necessary. After the valve is exposed we need to determine its manufacturer/age and or physical appearance. Assuming there is a probability for repair, we would proceed with this option. Order repair kit. Normally they are a few days away. (If we shut down the system, dismantle the valve and then need a repair kit, we would then need to order the kit and repeat the shut down/recharge procedure.) The decision to order the kit or inspect would be further discussed once the check valve is exposed. Assuming the above was successful the next decision is how to bury the valve. Ideally the valve would have a vault installed with a steel plate to cover. This allows for future inspections and or maintenance. The vault needs to be rated for vehicle traffic (public area's) and adds expense. The other option is to just bury it and dig it up again for the next five year inspection. Typically if this involves concrete repair it is not the best solution. Again it would have to be discussed/evaluated/priced.

The next option is to replace the valve. This option requires (MMWD requirement) a plastic spool to be installed before the check valve (this is to ensure that no electrical current from the consumer side can cause premature corrosion to MMWD piping). This HDPE spool takes up space that was not there originally. This creates another variable to replace or repair. If there is room for the spool, the check valve and the repair is questionable, this is the best replacement solution. The vault/verses burial is still needs to be evaluated.

The next scenarios are based on the first two not being a viable option/impossible to install etc. This involves moving the check valve (above ground/next to the building/etc).If these options are necessary MMWD approval/site visit will be required. Discussion and planning would be with owner/agent would be necessary. Also necessary is contacting the local fire department and submitting plans and approval to the city, as well as permit fees. Note: the existing check valve still needs to be removed and the HDPE spool installed.

In summary, each system needs to be looked at and evaluated, uncovered to determine which course of action should be taken. Usually fix prices can be given to uncover the detector check valve, and then more accurate prices once uncovered. After a site visit a budget cost on step by step procedures will be sent.

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There are strict codes (NFPA 13) that must be adhered to requiring prolonged shut downs of a sprinkler system (overnight). If the code is followed as written, your insurance company, local fire department, police department and alarm company's may need to be notified. Depending on the occupancies a guard may have to be posted. Our goal is not to have this happen. Careful planning as stated above normally gets the system back online the same day. If we suspect this could happen we notify the above before the problems arise.

Other unknown variables is the condition of the system itself. The two biggest factors that affect us are age of piping, fittings and how they were installed originally. This involves the steel components not being protected from nature's elements. Again once exposed normally these problems can be seen and prepared for.

Please feel free to email /call with any questions or comments you have.

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