



Inspections

Inspection season has started, with inspections complete in four of the towns I work with and five more towns scheduled for July.

So far, these inspections have been very similar to those done in the past. All the inspections I am scheduled to be involved with this year will be conducted by one of the four new employees at MNOPS, but that doesn't mean there won't be an experienced person from that agency present-the new hires are being accompanied by an experienced employee during each inspection.

One thing that is a little different than last year is that in some cases the inspections are a little more focused on particular areas. So far this hasn't been a meaningful change. Also, every inspection this year has included at least some attention on drug and alcohol plans. You should be familiar with your drug and alcohol plans, know where your collection site is, and have a record of supervisor training in recognizing reasonable suspicion of drug or alcohol abuse.

Inspections that include a field portion have mainly focused on corrosion control including taking some cathodic readings, inspection of meter sets in high traffic areas, including schools, hospitals, and nursing homes, and walking through the business district. When an inspector looks at a meter set, they want to see the following:

- Adequate barricades to protect the meter set from damage by vehicles
- Protection from ice or snow especially if ice damage is a possibility
- Regulators and relief valves that have proper screens in the vent, and the vent pointed down, in a safe location (not next to an air intake)
- PAINT! All above ground facilities must be protected from atmospheric corrosion
- Proper supports-it's not OK to let the meter set hang on customer piping. Also, it is good practice to use some material that prevents metal to metal contact between the meter set and support, to protect from corrosion.

All in all, not a lot new. I'm trying to get out to go over the material ahead of time if people want that, so please feel free to call if you have questions about inspections. I will continue to update as the year goes on.

Code Corner

I suspect that most if not all of you have heard about or seen reports of the severe tornado that struck Wadena at about 5:00 PM on June 17. Since the tornado passed about 2-3 blocks west of my home, my wife and I were lucky enough to only have to pick up some branches in our yard.

The gas distribution system (along with the electric system) in Wadena was severely damaged, with multiple underground leaks resulting from the tornado. In most cases it seems these leaks resulted from large trees being uprooted. I have never seen a scenario like that before, and in retrospect I believe that all of our emergency plans could benefit from more detailed direction of how to respond to tornados. 192.615(a)(3)(iv) states that emergency plans should provide for "Prompt and effective response to a notice of ...emergency", including "Natural disaster".

I've started making some notes after talking with the people who responded to the Wadena tornado, and hopefully these can lead to a more useful manual. I also want to try and put together an emergency response scenario based on a tornado to help operators be prepared in case such a thing happens in your town.

Construction Reminder

Something to keep in mind: the MNOPS Alert Notice from May 10 requires that every operator take action to prevent sewer service lateral cross bores and document the actions taken. I sent out a form that can be used last month. This issue has come up a couple of times already in inspections. Please be sure you are documenting the actions you are taking to prevent cross bores. You will likely be asked for this during an inspection. I can help if you have questions.

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