



INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF UTILITY SERVICES

Date: January 25, 2018
To: Jason E. Brown, County Administrator
From: Vincent Burke, P.E., Director of Utility Services
Prepared By: Cindy Corrente, Utilities Finance Manager
Subject: Resolution to Allow for the Installation of a Temporary Hose Bib Assembly for New Construction

DESCRIPTIONS AND CONDITIONS:

With the upswing in the economy and new construction, Indian River County Department of Utility Services (IRCDUS) has encountered numerous problems wherein various contractors and their sub-contractors are tampering with utility connections. Most of these occurrences are taking place in residential communities where new homes are being constructed. Since February 2013, IRCDUS staff has discovered over one hundred (100) instances of tampering with the County’s Utility System. It is suspected that many more such occurrences are actually taking place. However, these are typically discovered when staff is reading meters nearby or conducting a certificate of occupancy (CO) inspection nearby. In most of these situations, the curb stops were broken, locks removed, and the contractors connected directly to the County’s water system bypassing both the meter and the check valve. These bypass actions directly offset the protection of the public water supply (PWS).

ANALYSIS:

Tampering with the water connection can be potentially harmful to the entire potable water system. When water services are constructed within a development and ultimately turned over to the County at the time the subdivisions are completed, each service has a curb stop and a check valve at the end of it. The service is locked off at the curb stop. Eventually, a meter will be installed after the check valve.

The use of the check valve is required by both IRCDUS and the Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). This is to prevent any unsanitary water or other harmful fluids from back-flowing into the County’s potable water supply.

When constructing a new home, the builder typically requests a meter once the form boards are in place; having this proposed assembly will allow a builder to request a meter sooner, if desired. Any water used in construction should be taken from the customer’s side of the meter. However, IRCDUS has discovered numerous occurrences where either the contractor never requested a meter and illegally connected to the water supply; or they removed the meter and check valve, then connected directly to the County’s water system. They bypass both the meter and the safety check valve device.

Indian River County Code Section 201.26 specifically reads that “It shall be illegal and subject to punishment provided herein for any person to maliciously, willfully break, damage, destroy, uncover, deface, or tamper with any structure, appurtenance or equipment which is part of the county water or sewerage systems.”

Despite fines being issued, these occurrences continue. One builder has been assessed over forty (40) fines for tampering. Administrative staff has met with representatives of this particular company numerous times to no avail. They continue to find this builder removing meters and check valves, or never requesting a meter until they are ready to CO the home.

As staff continues to be concerned about the safety of the potable water system, they look for new ways to prevent risks to the system. One such method is to install a temporary stand pipe, hose bib and Watts anti-siphon device on the customer side of the meter for all new construction meter installations. The hope is that the contractor will utilize the hose bib rather than remove the check valve and/or meter. Since this problem is directly affiliated with new construction, staff recommends passing the cost of the apparatus to the parties causing the problem.

FUNDING:

The current cost to construct and install the temporary standpipe with the hose connection is \$35.00. Staff suggests that this cost be passed to the contractor. In order to establish the authority to pass on this cost, a resolution would have to be adopted.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Board of County Commissioners review and adopt the proposed Resolution assigning the cost of the new construction stand pipe assembly to the contractor.

ATTACHMENT:

Diagram of temporary hose bib apparatus
Proposed Resolution