



June 2023 NEWSLETTER

The Group
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Greetings all,

The Group met virtually on June 21st where we had a very informative discussion about fire systems and backflow concerns.

The attendees were Treasurer Dennis McLaughlin, Vice Chair Wednesday Smith, Secretary Kathy Caldwell, Carla Snyder from Coal Creek Water, Brett Baker from City of Bothell, Tyler Buss and Mike Lee from the City of Bellingham, Daniel Snell from City of Issaquah, Paul Molisani our Webmaster, Indee Girven from Kitsap PUD, Courtney Shilling from Skagit PUD, Candida Granillo-Dodds from WADOH, Tim Cantwell and DeLynn Erickson from Woodinville Water, and James Monaghan from Washington Water Service.

We were fortunate to have two fire system experts attend the meeting. Mr. Tracy Moore, owner of Moore Fire Protection and Fire Marshal Todd Short from the City of Redmond.

They shared with us a plethora of great information regarding fire system designs along with pros and cons for each type of system for Single Family Residence, Multi-Family, and Mixed Use. Most larger cities such as Seattle, Tacoma and Redmond have adopted the standard that all SFRs will be sprinklered. If your water system doesn't require a fire system, it may be coming eventually. We also chatted about shut-off for non-payment and non-compliance for backflow testing and the legalities involved.

The three most common systems for residential are:

- Stand Alone: Separate tap and usually metered connection that requires backflow protection.
- Flow Through: Domestic and fire line combined and designed to circulate and remain potable.
- Passive-Purge: Domestic and fire line combined with a toilet being the last point of use to keep water fresh.

Todd specifically discussed the problem with the stand-alone systems which Redmond started installing in 2007. When annual backflow testing was completed, the reports often were noted as "found off, left off" which is a serious concern. The homeowners could shut off the fire system while leaving the domestic water intact. There were also a handful of times they were accidentally left off by a BAT.

The flow through systems are good but expensive to plumb. The passive-purge seems to be favored by installers and water purveyors.

All of this and much more is explained in detail in the attached best practices guide provided by the Washington Fire Sprinkler Coalition group. It is a living document written in a simple fashion and easy to understand. It's a good idea to read through it and save it for reference later. Wednesday pointed out that many homeowners ask her questions about their fire systems and often times, we don't have answers.

Todd and Tracy would like to keep up the discussion with our Group on how to help create an industry standard that will work for all players. They are looking for a region-wide consensus for best practices. In efforts to develop and maintain our professional relationships, Todd invited us to attend their quarterly virtual best practices forum. Some members that were attending the meeting have already signed up to be invited to attend. The next meeting is September 14th. If you would like an invite and are willing to participate, please email to me at caldwell@snohomishwa.gov and I will see that you are added to distribution list.

Much of our discussion related to mutual communication between the Fire Inspectors, installers, and the water operators. It seems that everyone is sort of on different pages when it comes to design, standards, installation practices and drinking water safety. For example, there is no specification for the maximum length of an arm-over. That is a branch 90 degrees off the mainline header and everyone has their own opinions on what this design should look like. Tracy explained that as a fire system installer, he is not able to purchase or install a backflow preventer without a plumbing license. That policy causes significant issues for his company along with many others. Inspections and timing are common issues.

Also, we still have room for folks to take a tour of Climate Pledge Arena next month. If you would like to attend, please let me know and I will add you to the list of participants. I've attached the flyer with the details.

Have a good day!

Kathy Caldwell-Sec.

Wednesday Smith-Vice Chair