

The Repair Guys

In our line of work, we field questions from contractors and technicians concerning repairs, installations, and general backflow prevention practices. We'd like to share some questions we receive and our answers. Everyone has different opinions on these subjects and we would like to hear yours. Contact us with your questions and ideas via email at: imark@backflowparts.com or mail us at American Backflow Products Co., P.O. Box 37025, Tallahassee, FL. 32315.

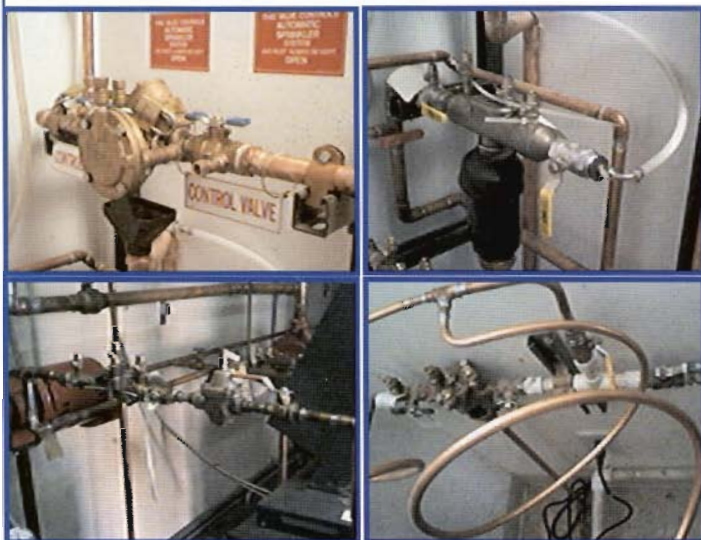
QUESTION —

In our June, 2001 segment, we came up with a definition for troubleshooting and discussed some basic ideas about how it can help save time and money when repairing a backflow device in the field. All this sounds good in theory, but what information are we looking for and how do we find it?

MARK -

For a troubleshooting process to work, there are 3 types of information that we use to help determine a problem. They are visual, test gauge and device information. Normally, the first sign of a problem is visual, so we will start with that. Visual information is simply being able to look at a device and it's environment to see signs of a potential problem. For example:

- Can you find signs of discharge or leaks on or around the unit?
- Does it look like the device has been repaired before?
- Is there equipment up or downstream of the device that could affect how it works?



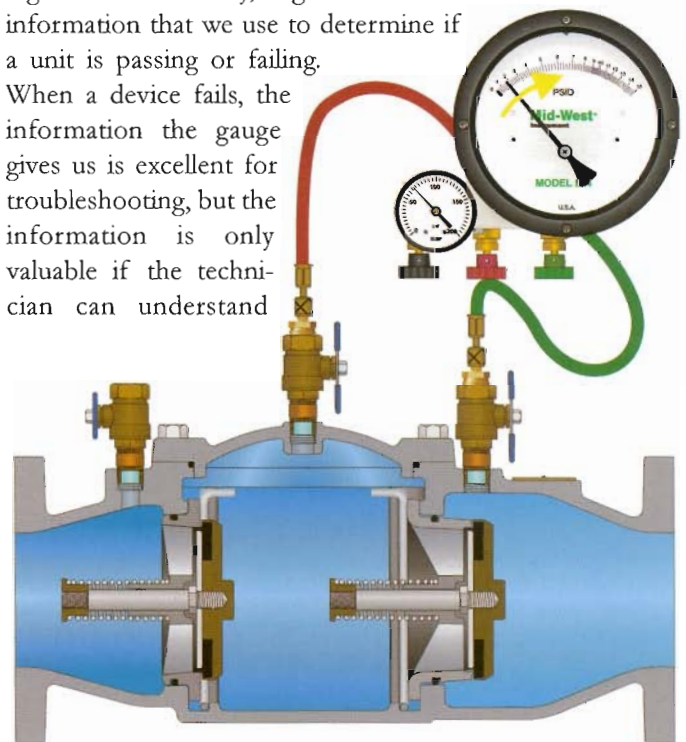
- Are there signs of freeze damage or is it susceptible to freezing?
- Are you able to do a visual of the internal parts?

Gathering visual information sounds very easy and that is exactly what we want.

- JASON

Now let's look at test gauge information. The test gauge is a very important tool for the tester or technician, but it is not a magical device that just tells us if a unit is passing or failing. If used correctly, it gives us values or information that we use to determine if a unit is passing or failing.

When a device fails, the information the gauge gives us is excellent for troubleshooting, but the information is only valuable if the technician can understand

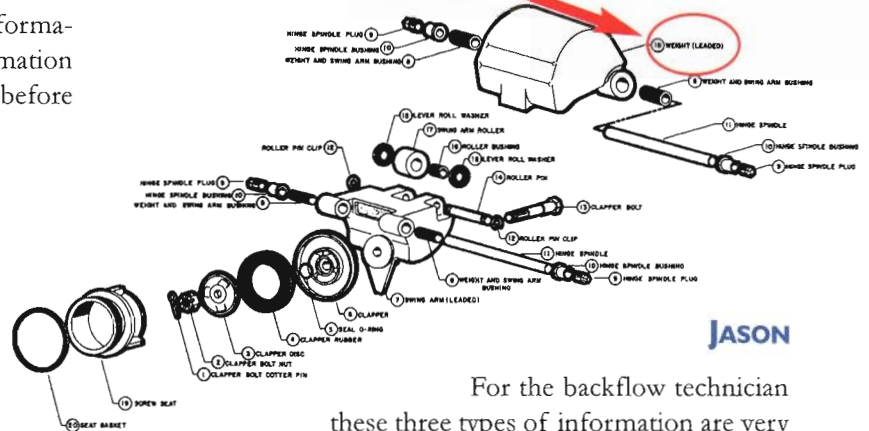
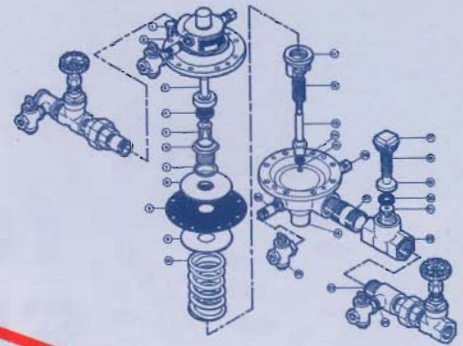


what it is. For example, if the needle rises when it is supposed to fall, can you tell what is going on inside of the device? This type of information takes some experience to recognize and use, and also requires a good working knowledge of how the test gauge and backflow preventer works hydraulically.

MARK -

The third type of information is device information. This is information about the particular device that you are working on. For example: What type of device is it? Mechanically and hydraulically how does it work? How old is the device? Are there field test records from your local water authority available to study the history of that device? A manufacturer flow curve and repair manual is also important to have on hand to help plan a repair and to know what the original specifications are supposed to be from the factory. Device information is usually taken for granted, but with this information you can actually start your troubleshooting process before you ever approach the unit.

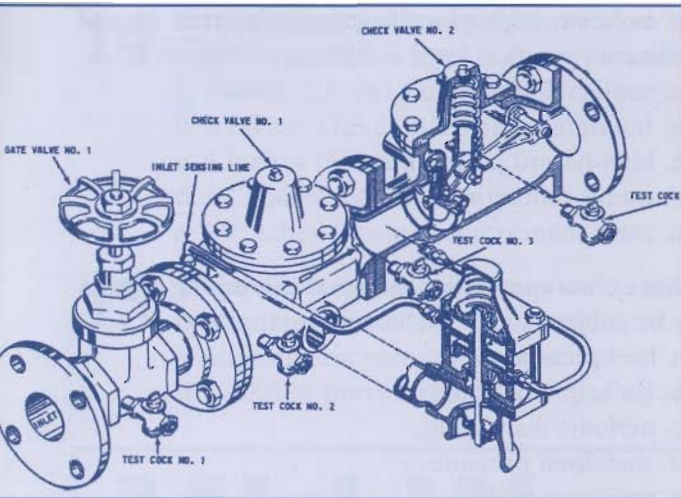
It's important to know your backflow preventers, who made them, where to find repair information - and the details like lead weighted check valves!



JASON

For the backflow technician these three types of information are very easy to find especially when you are testing a device. Of course, you don't need every bit of this information to troubleshoot a device, but the more you have the easier it is to determine or diagnose the problem. In the next article we will go over some ideas to help develop a troubleshooting process or plan that uses the information we have gathered.

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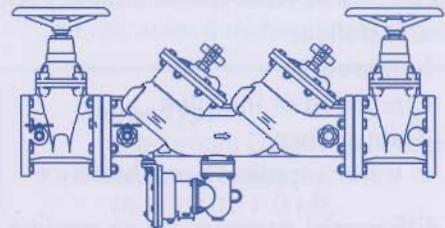
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