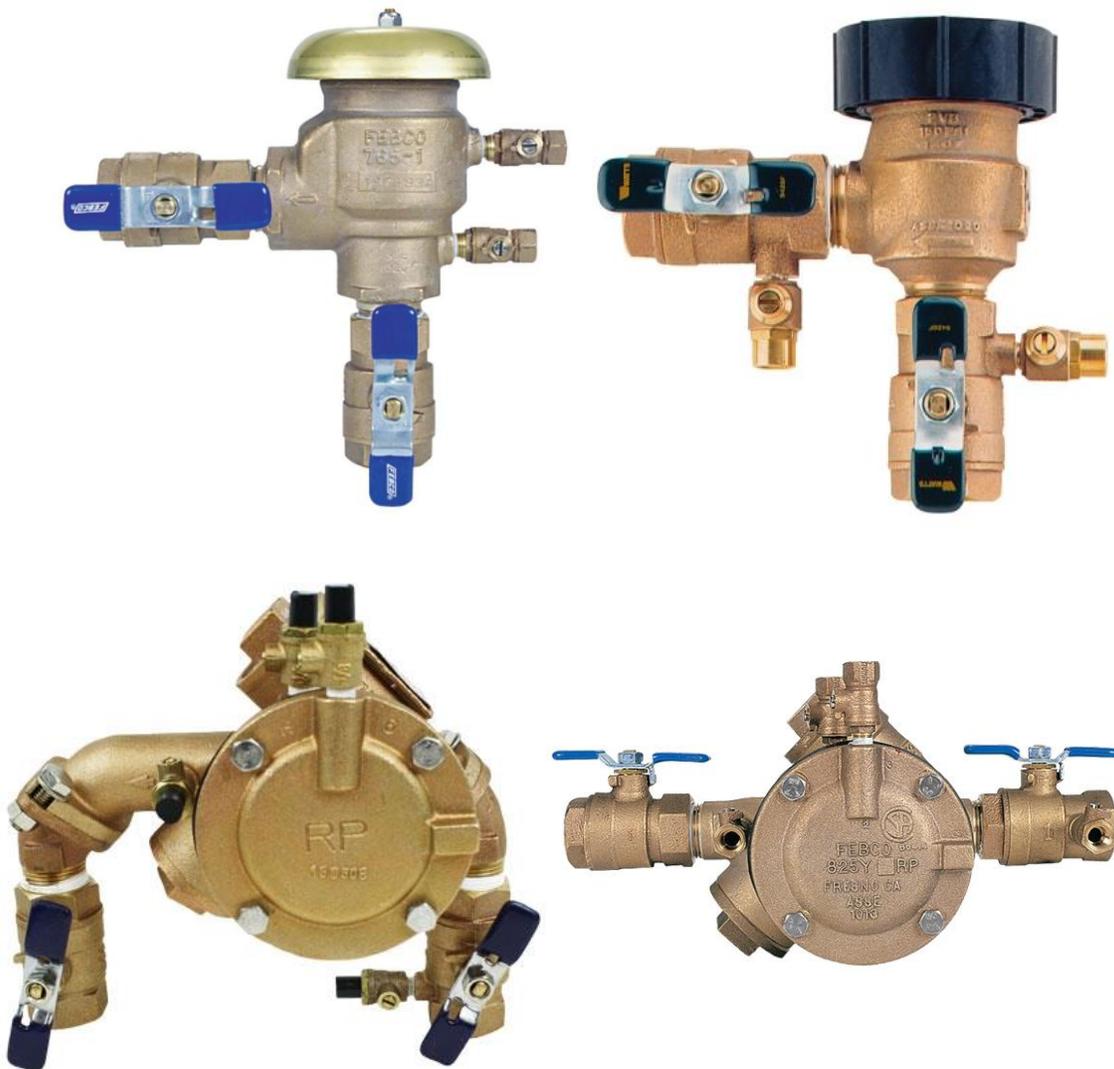


Sprinkler Tinkerer 303-653-7474

How to Protect Your Backflow from Freezing

This is a simple walkthrough on how to temporarily protect your backflow from freezing when temperatures dip below 32 degrees. This is NOT a substitute for having the system properly winterized with a compressor.

If your sprinkler system has been activated in the spring and a late freeze is going to occur, or if your system is still active and the first frosts of fall are around the corner, this will help you get through them with as little damage as possible to your backflow. Your backflow is tough, but it is also one of the most vulnerable parts of your sprinkler system as it is above ground and exposed to air temperature and its fluctuations. Your backflow will look something like one of these pictures.



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1. To begin protecting your backflow, you will first need to turn the water to the sprinkler system off inside the house, or in the yard if you have an outdoor tap.
2. Once the water is off, get a flathead screwdriver, go the backflow and turn all the valves 45 degrees from their current position. You will need the screwdriver for the smaller valves, called test-cocks. The positioning of the valves, called “45ing” is simply so that any water that is inside or outside the ball of the valve can move freely and is much less likely to damage itself. Your valves should now look similar to the left picture below.



3. For homes with the irrigation valve inside the house, once the valves are all in their new positions, go back to the valve where you shut the water off to the system. Bring a cup or bucket to catch the water. Once you are at the valve, locate the drain for the sprinkler system, and open it. Depending on how long the pipes are from that valve to the backflow, you may get anywhere from one half cup of water to a gallon.
4. Once the water has stopped, close the drain again.
5. Now, there are two possibilities for draining the other half of the backflow. The first is that there is a drain below the backflow in one of the valve boxes on the property. If this is true, open that drain and your backflow will now be empty enough that freezing will not damage it.
The second is if you have no drains in the system that you can see or open, you will need to go to your irrigation clock/timer/controller and run all the zones for a couple minutes each. This will get enough water out of the main line and backflow to protect it.
6. Once all of this is complete, you can further insulate against freezing by wrapping the backflow and any other pipes in that area with rags, old towels and blankets, or a store-bought backflow insulator.
7. Your backflow is now ready to withstand the cold until the system can be properly winterized.