



## Tales from the CLAIMS Crypt

### Openings Left in Systems during Service Work

#### **Loss: \$14,300 paid**

##### What happened?

Our Contractor was hired to replace heads in an existing sprinkler system. Part way through the day, the employee doing the service job was called to another project. Another employee came to finish the job. The first employee already removed some of the heads, so the second employee picked up the work, finished the replacements, and then charged the system with water. Unfortunately, the second employee missed a head in a closet area and flooded the room.

#### **Loss: \$192,000 paid**

##### What happened?

Our Contractor was hired to add sprinklers to an existing building. To ensure the correct valve was closed and drained, the employee opened a hose connection in the stairwell. The work was completed and the system put back into service, but the employee forgot to close the hose valve. Water flooded the stairwell. The water damage was exacerbated because an employee for the building owner turned the water back on while the sprinkler contractor's employee was on break, and the water flow was not immediately noticed.

#### **Loss: \$23,000 paid**

##### What happened?

Our contractor performed a hydro test at the rough-in stage of the project. The system was then drained to add a new one-inch drop to the system. The cut-in was made, but not completed. The drywall contractor sheet-rocked over the opening and it was soon forgotten. The contractor returned to finish the system and put it into service.

## Take the Extra Step

In each of these three losses, a simple air test – just a few pounds – would have identified an opening in the system. Blowbacks are effective, but in service work, the technique can be more challenging and sometimes produces a false ‘puff back’.

### ***A few extra minutes are all it takes to avoid a water related loss.***

- Check Your Work
- Test With Air (*steel systems only*)
- Introduce Water in Stages
  - Introduce water to 15 psi, close control valve and recheck work.
  - Increase water pressure to 40-50 psi, close valve and recheck work.
  - Increase water in increments to the working pressure, each time checking to ensure the pressure is holding and there is no visible water at the work site.
  - When the system working pressure is reached, recheck the work area one last time, walk the system back to the riser, and return the control valve to the open position.

Also, consider:

- Red Tag Control Valves  
When new systems are connected to a water source or when performing service on an existing system, utilize a **Tag Out Procedure**. Placing an informational tag on the riser will alert other contractors or building personnel working in the area that system should not be turned on. The tag should be a bright color and include the company name and phone number. Provide a place to record who shut down the system, the date and time and why the valve is closed. Once the work is completed the tag should be removed, attached to the work order (if applicable) and maintained in the job file.

For service work, if more than one valve is closed or opened (for draining), tags should be used on all the valves and each tag numbered or cross referenced on the main control valve’s tag.

- Standard Shut-Down and Start-Up Procedure  
A standard start-up/shut-down checklist can reduce the potential for loss resulting from inappropriate sprinkler system start-up and shut-down procedures. Incorporate the checklist into the standard record retention when completed, signed, and dated.

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