



# MEMORANDUM

EUGENE WATER & ELECTRIC BOARD



TO: Commissioners Brown, Mital, Helgeson, Manning and Simpson  
FROM: Brad Taylor, Water Operations Manager  
DATE: July 11, 2014  
SUBJECT: Operation of EWEB-owned shut-off valves  
OBJECTIVE: Information Only

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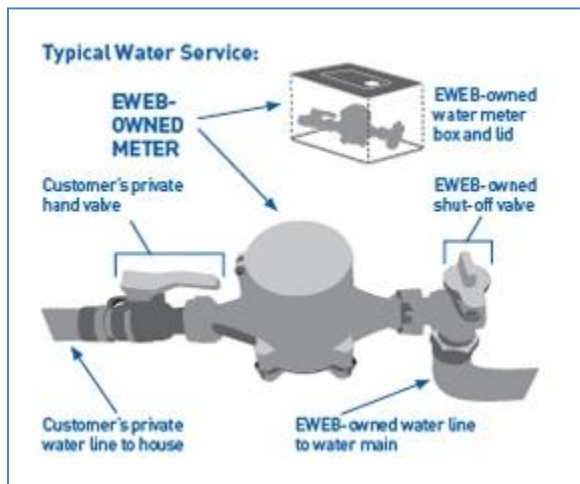
## Issues

Current EWEB policy and State law (ORS 30.182) prohibits anyone other than EWEB authorized personnel from operating any portion of the water system infrastructure including EWEB-owned shut-off valves. A large percentage of customers do not have private hand valves located on the customer side of the meter and thus have no way to stop the flow of water from the EWEB system without calling and requesting assistance. This results in significant resources from EWEB to operate the EWEB-owned shut-off valve for customers to perform work on their plumbing systems. In addition, customers and customer's agents (licensed journeyman plumbers) are often frustrated by the EWEB process.

## Background

National Uniform Plumbing Code has had a requirement for this valve since 1946. A typical (code compliant) installation is shown below in Figure 1. It is not clear when State/ local plumbing officials formally adopted/enforced this requirement, but from field observation it appears that it happened sometime in the early 1970's.

**Figure 1. Code Compliant Water Service**



## EWB Process

The primary reason behind State law and EWEB Policy is to protect the water system from being operated by inexperienced, untrained individuals whose actions can compromise water system integrity and consequently public health.

EWEB does not currently charge the customer for operation of the EWEB owned shut-off valve during normal business hours. On April 1, 2013 EWEB implemented a Water-Related After Hours call out fee (Water Policy W-III(A), currently \$75 dollars).

EWEB has replaced damaged valves and documented unauthorized accidental valve operation resulting in turned off fire protection systems and neighborhoods losing water service.

EWEB personnel acknowledge that EWEB owned shut-off valves are likely operated daily by customers and agents of customers.

The policy has had controversy with both customers and the plumbing community. EWEB personnel have no way to enforce the policy and it is often difficult to have conclusive proof of who has caused damage to the EWEB system.

The policy requires significant resources to manage and can result in inefficiencies for EWEB Operations and for our Customer owners. In 2013 EWEB staff performed over 1600 turn off/on's. To date in 2014 (through July 10<sup>th</sup>) staff have done over 700. We estimate on average a minimum of one hour of staff time per activity.

### **Discussion**

Staff believes that the existing policy can be refined.

Staff will be developing a pilot program starting no later than January 2015. EWEB will engage with the local plumbing community in the development of the pilot program. The primary objectives of the pilot will be to reduce the risk of damaging the integrity of the EWEB water distribution system, reduce EWEB resources needed to perform the activity, and to increase the number of customers who have customer hand valves.

The pilot program may allow authorized personnel to operate the EWEB shut off valve. Authorized personnel may include journeyman plumbers, who have gone through EWEB training and agree to follow EWEB protocols and take responsibility for actions including the cost of repairs for EWEB damaged infrastructure.

Staff is also considering initiating a more comprehensive incentive program to encourage customers without a customer hand valve to have a valve installed. Staff will also be evaluating additional fees and charges to reinforce the need for a customer hand valve.

### **Recommendation and Requested Board Action**

This item is information only and accordingly there is no requested Board action.