How to Turn Your Irrigation System Back on in the Spring

Hi. I'm Thomas, and I'm a licensed irrigator here in the State of Texas.

Today we're going to be talking about turning your irrigation system back on after it has been shut off during the winter months.

Before we turn the controller on, we need to locate and find your backflow prevention device.

Today, we're working with a Pressure Vacuum Breaker, known in the industry as a PVB. They can typically be found in a garden or flower bed or along the wall of a house or garage.

There will be an indicator to show which direction the water is flowing. On this particular device the water is flowing this way.

We need to control the flow of the water before we can turn the irrigation system back on. So, we need to close these valves completely. To do that, we're going to turn each isolation valve to the closed position, which should be a 90 degree angle or perpendicular to the pipe.

Then, we're going to take a screwdriver and close the two test cocks by rotating their screws to a 90 degree angle.

There should be an isolation valve located between the backflow prevention assembly and the water meter. It's been a rule that one of these valves be installed on all new irrigation systems since January 1st of 2009. But, even before that, it was common practice for licensed irrigators to install one of these valves.

Let's go ahead and work our way back from the PVB to the water meter to see if we can locate the valve. It should be inside of a valve box so that it's easy to access.

Now that we've located our isolation valve in between the water meter and our backflow prevention assembly, go ahead and remove the cover of the valve. Inside, if there's a ball valve, turn the handle 90 degrees to return the flow of water. If it's a gate valve, like the hose bibs on your house, turn the handle until it no longer rotates.

Now let's go back to our PVB.

Now we don't want water to rush through the assembly, so we're going to slowly turn the upstream isolation valve. Sometimes, water will come out of the top and you'll hear a small pop. The valve should be parallel or inline with the pipe when it's fully open.

After we've opened that one, we're going to slowly turn our downstream valve. And so it is fully open parallel or inline with the pipe.

If you notice that your assembly is leaking or you notice a leak in your irrigation system after you've turned it on, call a local licensed irrigator who can come and make any repairs for you.

If you don't notice any leaks, go to the controller and turn it to the on position.

Set your controller to run a test cycle or manually go through each zone and follow them around the yard. Make note of any sprinklers that might be out of alignment, that need to be raised or lowered, any

spray that's going on to the pavement, sidewalk, or house, or anything in general that might be broken or need repair. If any of these are issues you can't fix yourself, contact a licensed irrigator in your area who can make the repairs for you. Anything you leave broken or damaged not only wastes water, but will end up costing you money in the long run on your water bill.

Also make sure to check the schedule on your controller and follow the settings provided by your water supplier. If your water supplier doesn't provide a schedule, a typical rule of thumb is that the lawn needs up to one inch of water per week. Although really, in the spirit of conservation, the sprinkler controller should be turned off from November through February. Depending on how much precipitation has occurred over the winter months, that could even be into late March or early April.

Now is also a good time to check the battery on your controller. The battery will allow the controller to keep your program settings in case of a power outage. The battery will not operate your system during a power outage.

Check your rain sensor and make sure it's not covered by tree branches, and that it is clean of any debris.

You may want to hire a licensed Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester, known as a BPAT, to come and check your backflow prevention assembly. Typically, everyone's yard has some sort of pet or animal fecal material, pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizer in it. After a rain, the water tends to mix with these substances and puddle around the sprinkler heads, which can then drip back into the irrigation system.

In the event of a backflow event, like a city main line breaking or perhaps a fire down the road, this water can be siphoned from the irrigation system back into the house for you and your family to drink or shower in. The backflow prevention assembly helps protect this from happening and keep you, your neighbors, and your family safe.

As far as the irrigation system, though, that's pretty much it. Be sure to check out our video for how to shut your system off next fall.