Spotlight: Extendable Backwater Valve Eliminates Need for Inspection Manhole

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The Clean Check extendable backwater valve from RectorSeal provides above-ground accessibility, eliminating the need for a service manhole or vault. Designed to prevent sewage backup into homes and light commercial buildings, the valve is installed outside and up to 12 feet below ground level, primarily in hilly terrain.

In the event of back pressure from a plugged sewer or groundwater flooding, a plasticized PVC flapper blocks reverse flow and prevents sewage from entering the building. Valves are made of PVC or ABS and available in 3-, 4- or 6-inch diameters. The valve is primarily installed in new construction but can be retrofit in existing structures. It cannot be used as a clean-out and doing so can damage the assembly.

Backwater valves are required if the flood level rim of the lowest fixture of a building is below the elevation of the cover of the next upstream manhole. A clean-out is typically installed between the house and the sewer line on the downhill side of the structure with the backwater valve installed between the clean-out and the structure.

“The standard backwater valve that can be used in a basement only can be installed 2 to 3 feet below the surface — something that’s arm’s length,” says Jerry Tomasello, marketing director for RectorSeal. “If you have to go beyond that, you need something that will allow you to get down to that level. It could be a manhole or some type of vault, and manholes and vaults can be extremely expensive.”

The extendable valve consists of the upper collar, the flapper unit and the valve body. Also needed for installation are a threaded clean-out plug, adapter and 2-, 4-, 6- or 8-inch riser pipes (depending on valve size), which can be purchased through a plumbing wholesaler.

The 4-inch valve assembly is serviced by removing the 6-inch clean-out plug, loosening the set screw, grasping the finger hole at the top of the collar and lifting the entire assembly from the riser pipe to inspect, clean or replace the flapper at ground level. The snap-in, pull-out flapper can withstand up to 75 psi (code requires 5 psi) at 177 feet of head.

RectorSeal recommends the flapper be inspected at least once a year by a licensed plumber to ensure optimal performance. The extendable backwater valve meets IPC, UPC/IAPMO, ICC, IRC and CSA plumbing codes. 800/231-3345; www.rectorseal.com.