

Water Valves for Washing Machines

Introduction

Short of fire, nothing causes more damage to the inside of a property than leaking water. It is estimated that 65% of property damage to community associations is caused by water leaking from failing pipes, hoses, plumbing fixtures and appliances.

This guide addresses water valves, a contributing factor in many losses resulting from failed washer hoses. Our research shows that there are simple and inexpensive steps associations can take to prevent most of this damage.

Turning Off the Water

Closing the faucets when the washer is not running is a great way to extend the life of a washing machine hose. It also limits the chance of a hose failure to a single wash cycle.

However, if the faucets are not closed regularly and if they are not properly maintained, closing them could become impossible. Corrosion and mineralization can lock them up tight.

To eliminate that problem, we offer the following suggestions. *Please note:* You should implement these measures in addition to hose replacement, not instead of it.

What CAU Recommends:

- > Encourage and remind residents to turn off the water when not using washers.
- > Require residents to equip washers with guaranteed, leak proof/burst proof washer hoses.
- > Equip feeder pipes with a washing machine valve or automatic shut off valve.
- > Remind all residents to know where the water main shut off is in their residence and how to use it.

Need More Information?

The valves discussed in this guide are available at plumbing supply houses, home improvement centers and at several online outlets. Associations can also contact CAU's Loss Control Department for additional information.

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The Washing Machine Valve

The easiest, fastest and cheapest way to prevent problems is to replace the faucets with a washing machine valve. This valve requires a fraction of the force needed to turn faucets and opens and closes both lines in a single, quick stroke. With washing machine valves, residents quickly get into the habit of turning off the water. The washing machine valve requires installation by a plumber and ranges in price and quality.

There is an ASOV readily available for nearly every residential

appliance that uses water. For washing machines, there are three basic types:



The Automatic Shut off Valve

1. A water-controlling valve is intended to replace the standard washing machine faucets. The device mounts on the hot and cold water lines and an electronic valve opens the water lines only when it senses electricity flowing to the washing machine. When the electricity stops flowing, signaling that the washer is off, the ASOV closes and stops the flow of water into the washer hoses. This device retails for around \$175, plus installation.
2. An appliance specific valve mounted to the supply lines will automatically shut off water to the washer once the sensor detects water. A water sensor placed beneath the washer signals the electronic valves to close and sounds an alarm once water is detected beneath the appliance. Most of these valves are equipped with a battery backup so you're still protected during a power outage. These devices retail for around \$100, plus installation.
3. A whole house valve described by Popular Science as "a circuit breaker for your home's plumbing system" is installed at a single point in the water main. If water flow into the residence exceeds a defined limit, it shuts off water to the whole house and sounds an alarm. The alarm

signal can be connected to an existing security system and the valve is equipped with a battery backup. These devices retail for around \$1,100, plus installation.



Installing and using either the knife switch or a water-controlling ASOV limits the significant risk of hose failure to the washing cycle – about 25 minutes. Installing the correct type of hose further reduces the risk of failure. The use of an appliance specific or whole house ASOV will not reduce the risk of a hose failure but will limit the resulting water damage if a hose does fail.

The Water Main Shut Off

When a hose fails (in the absence of an ASOV) and the faucets cannot be closed, the last resort is the water main shut off. It stops all water flowing into the residence. The water main, which is the largest feeder pipe, enters the residence at the lowest floor level.

The shut off is usually a single lever mounted on the main at its point of entry. Turning the lever clockwise 90 degrees turn turns the water off. The shut off should be clearly marked with an arrow indicating the direction of closure. Everyone using or taking care of the residence should know its location.

Conclusion

Water is the most insidious and relentless of property destroyers. It ruins more property than fire. The only solution is prevention. Implementing the suggestions in this guide can minimize this threat and add years of useful life, safety and value to your property.

Associations that take prompt, effective action to prevent water damage do more than preserve their property. They relieve some of the financial pressure on their maintenance budgets and reserve replacement funds. Moreover, they avoid large, special assessments for the unanticipated, early replacement of major building elements.