

ALUMINUM ENCLOSURES AESTHETICS GUIDE

5 Design Considerations to Improve the View



DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS:

It's easy to disguise aluminum enclosures for backflow preventers and pumps. Use color, landscaping and other considerations to keep them out of sight and out of mind.

- 1 LOCATION
- 2 SIZE
- 3 LANDSCAPING
- 4 COLOR
- 5 WRAPS



INTRODUCTION

The best practice for backflow installation is an outdoor, above-ground enclosure. But a common barrier that prevents engineers from specifying the above-ground enclosure is aesthetics. We get it: A big shiny box in front of the building is not what the architect has in mind when thinking of a visually pleasing project. However, other ugly features of a commercial building are typically designed with aesthetics in mind. Examples include electrical transformers and dumpsters. Both of these are established fixtures outside the building, and it's obvious that thought has gone into disguising them. When's the last time you saw an electrical transformer sitting in front of a new building with no attempt to disguise it? All the tricks designers use to hide transformers can be applied to backflow enclosures (and pump enclosures) as well.

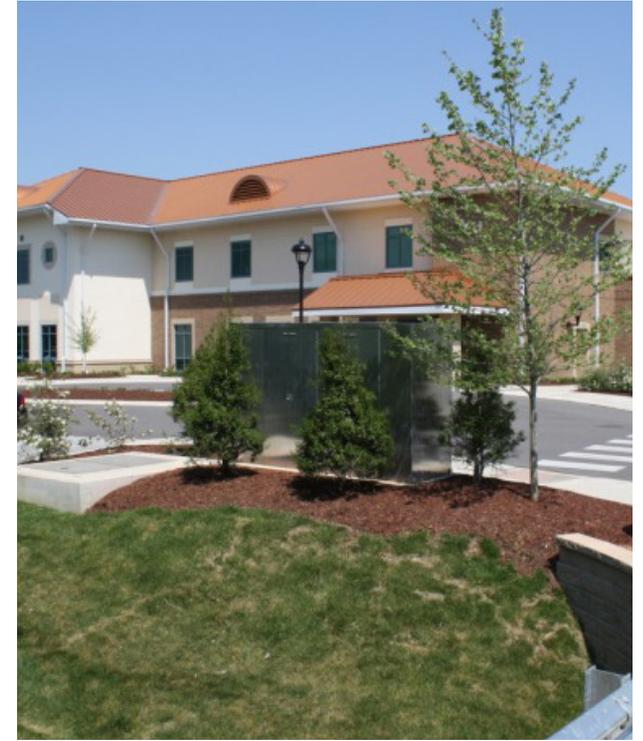
Design Consideration #1

THINK LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

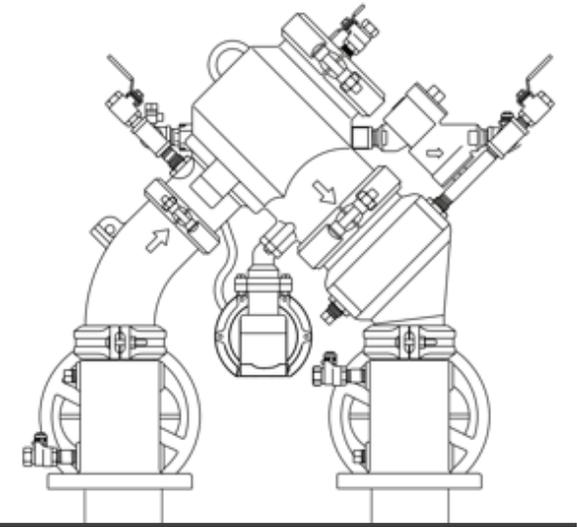
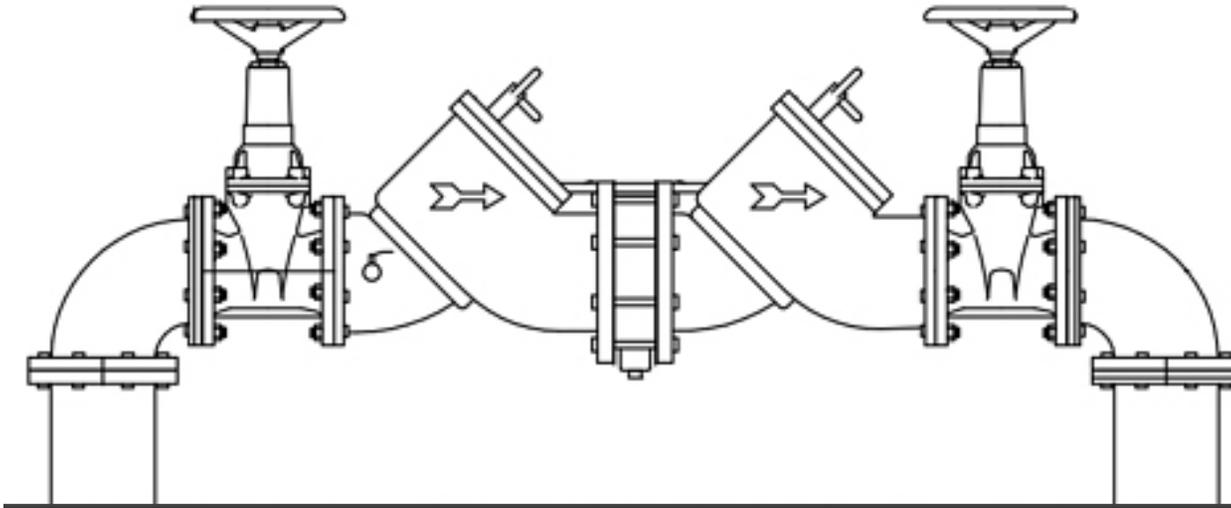
Enclosure Placement is Important

Historically, most civil engineers place the water tap for new service as close as possible to the property's planned driveway location. But with an above-ground backflow preventer enclosure to install, it's more sensible to think about the aesthetics and strategically place the water tap accordingly. Several jurisdictions have been using above-ground enclosures long enough that civil engineers are already thinking

about the enclosure's impact at the beginning. Seek to place the backflow assembly as close to the property line as you can, but consider what will be in public view. The property line doesn't exist solely at the front entrance or along a roadway. Backflow preventers can be installed behind or beside buildings out of sight and still stay in line with AWWA recommended best practices.



Notice the backflow enclosure location is not at the main entrance to the property.



Design Consideration #2

MAKE THE FOOTPRINT SMALLER

Until a few years ago, most backflow preventers 3 inches and larger were bulky and long. The new “n-type” backflow preventer solutions have changed that and have more compact assemblies. With a smaller assembly, you get a smaller backflow enclosure. In fact, the covers for these new designs are as much as 70 percent smaller than their predecessors. If your client has a choice, there is little doubt which version will be preferred. Both designs provide

the same backflow protection, and the package for each — backflow device and enclosure — is about the same price. By simply specifying an n-type backflow preventer with an enclosure, you’ll please the architect and building owner on your project. These significantly smaller boxes will not only be less of an eyesore from the beginning, but they’ll be easier to hide from view with color, landscaping, and a well-thought-out location.



Design Consideration #3

LANDSCAPING

You're Doing It Already Anyway, Right?

One of the easiest ways to make an enclosure more attractive is to design landscaping around it that hides it. This can be done before installation or even after, making it the easiest way to disguise an enclosure after it's already in place. However, it's important to be mindful of the plants you're using in the area. Don't use shrubs or bushes that will make access to your enclosure difficult. We've noticed on most new construction projects that landscaping around the backflow enclosure was not thought about. The building, parking lots, dumpsters and main entrance all seem to have purposeful landscaping design. But then there sits the enclosure with little if any landscaping. Similar to location, with a small amount of planning on the front end, the landscaping can be included in the design package.



A large backflow enclosure sits behind this landscaping.

Design Consideration #4

COLOR

Same Color as the Transformer?

Few designers realize enclosures are available in many colors. On many commercial projects, we've noticed the electrical transformer is green and it looks much more aesthetically pleasing than a shiny aluminum one. It's highly likely the architect and building owner will be more in favor of this look. Most manufacturers charge more for a color – other than the brushed aluminum – except Safe-T-Cover. After hearing from hundreds of civil designers, we learned that by offering our standard models in a few common colors at the same base price, we substantially increase the versatility

and desirability of our aluminum enclosures. In 2015, we began offering our most popular standard covers in three aesthetically pleasing colors. At the base price, you can choose a backflow preventer cover in Hartford Green, Slate Grey, Sierra Tan or the standard Brushed Aluminum. Our goal is to provide an option that helps blend aluminum shelters into the scenery, whether it's hidden in the greenery or integrated into a desert landscape. Of course, we can also ship in almost any custom color for a nominal fee. We are often asked how the enclosure is colored, and you'll

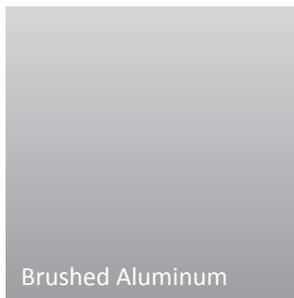


be pleased to know they are not painted and there is no risk of chipping over the life of the enclosure. We work with Pac-Clad®, the largest manufacturer of metal roofing material in the United States. They apply a coating of 70 percent full polyvinylidene fluoride (Kynar) to the aluminum. The coating and method were originally developed for use in abrasive environments but are also ideally suited for waterworks, industrial or backflow preventer enclosures.

STANDARD COLOR OPTIONS AVAILABLE (ADDITIONAL COLORS CAN BE ORDERED):



Hartford Green



Brushed Aluminum



Slate Grey



Sierra Tan

**Other colors are available for a nominal fee*



Design Consideration #5

WRAPS

Who'd Have Thought About This?

We've all noticed service trucks, vans and occasionally an automobile around town with some sort of wrap advertising a company. Often these "rolling billboards" are a work of art. You may be surprised to learn that wrapping has also found its way into the waterworks industry. These wrapped enclosures no longer look like plain aluminum boxes but instead contribute to the visual appeal of the building and surrounding area. This is the most creative way we've learned

to hide utility boxes. The first step is the design and layout for the surface area of the enclosure. Your wrapping company will likely have a designer on staff to help with ideas to promote the brand, products or services offered. Once you're satisfied with the concept, a proof is created for approval. Then the vinyl goes into production. Applying the wrap to the enclosure requires some prep work. The surface of the enclosure needs to be free of dirt and grease to apply it. A Nashville wrap firm

estimated the pricing for an enclosure 4 feet by 8 feet long and 6 feet tall for the wrap including installation would be somewhere in the range of \$800 to \$1,200. The wrap would even come with a warranty. The vinyl wrapping materials are made to withstand the impact of the sun but as we all well know, the sun is hard on surfaces. A wrapped enclosure should still look good seven or eight years after it is installed.

We know changing habits is hard. But we also know that as an engineer you're consistently looking for ways to improve your project design. The best place for a backflow preventer is outside and above-ground. To overcome the big shiny box, put some of these ideas to work. The architect, the property owner, and the general public will thank you.



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Safe-T-Cover.com

1-800-245-6333 | info@safe-t-cover.com

2710 Landers Ave. | Nashville, TN 37211