

## **11. - BACKFLOW AT A HOSPITAL / AUTOPSY FACILITY**

DATE OF BACKFLOW INCIDENT: December 1964

LOCATION OF BACKFLOW INCIDENT: Michigan

SOURCE(S) OF INFORMATION:

- Pacific Northwest Section of the American Water Works Association, Summary of Backflow Incidents, Fourth Edition, 1995

### **CASE HISTORY**

For some time, nurses at a Michigan hospital complained about rusty water coming from a hospital drinking fountain. When maintenance personnel finally looked into the matter, they discovered it was actually blood that the nurses were encountering at the drinking fountain. This blood had backflowed into the hospital's potable water system from an autopsy table.

Hospital autopsy tables have a sump to collect blood and washing from the autopsy procedure. These tables also have a hose-spray unit for washing off organs, etc. On an autopsy table at the Michigan hospital, there was no hook to hang up the hose-spray unit, so pathologists placed the unit in the table sump when they were not using it. There also was no vacuum breaker in the water supply line to the hose-spray unit on this table, and the hospital had severe backsiphonage problems. Therefore, blood and other washing from the autopsy table were sucked into the hospital's potable water system. The drinking fountain where the nurses were encountering the blood was about two doors from the autopsy room.