

## **15. - BACKFLOW AT A Pork PACKING HOUSE**

DATE OF BACKFLOW INCIDENT: October 1979

LOCATION OF BACKFLOW INCIDENT: Marshalltown, Iowa

SOURCE(S) OF INFORMATION:

- Pacific Northwest Section of the American Water Works Association, Summary of Backflow Incidents, Fourth Edition, 1995
- Watts Industries, Inc.; Watts Regulator News/Stop Backflow

### **CASE HISTORY**

In October 1979, \$2,000,000 worth of pork was contaminated at a Swift and Company packing house in Marshalltown, Iowa. The meat became contaminated when employees unknowingly sprayed nonpotable water on hog carcasses during the normal cleaning process. Food safety and quality service officials concluded that a cross-connection had been created between the potable water system and the nonpotable water lines in the packing house. This cross-connection allowed wastewater from the kill floor and water used to deodorize rendering operations to get into the potable water system.

The packing house was shut down for a long time while officials searched for the cause of the contamination, monitored decontamination and sterilization procedures, and decided what to do with the contaminated pork. Swift and Company reportedly spent more than \$3,000,000 because of the problem, and 200 people were unemployed while the packing house was shut down.