

Be in The KNOW about **BACKFLOW**



WHAT IS BACKFLOW?

Water systems depend on water pressure to keep water flowing in the proper direction through the pipes. However, a sudden or unexpected change in water pressure can cause an undesirable reversal in the normal flow of water. This is called backflow.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING A BACKFLOW EVENT?

During a backflow event, potentially non-potable water flows backwards from the consumer's internal plumbing system and returns to the public water supply, creating a possible health risk. For example, soapy water or other cleaning compounds can backflow through a hose submerged in a laundry basin.

WHAT IS A CROSS CONNECTION?

Cross connections are locations within the consumer's internal plumbing system where possible backflow can occur if a pressure differential exists. It is a point where non-potable water from the consumer's internal plumbing system can potentially enter the public water supply.

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON TYPES OF CROSS CONNECTIONS?

Common cross connections for residential properties include lawn irrigation systems, garden hose connections to chemical solution aspirators, hose bibs and water-operated sump pumps. Common cross connections for commercial properties include fire sprinklers, boilers, chillers, chemical mixing tanks, pressure pumps as well as lawn irrigation systems.

WHAT IS A BACKFLOW PREVENTER?

A backflow preventer is a mechanical assembly installed in the water line to prevent backflow from occurring at cross connections. It ensures that a one-way system of flow is maintained and thus protects the public water supply. Backflow preventers are installed right after the consumer's water meter and before the first branch line in their private plumbing (except for residential irrigation systems which are typically installed outside on the irrigation line).

WHY DO BACKFLOW PREVENTERS NEED TO BE TESTED?

Regular testing of a backflow preventer ensures that it is working properly. Ultimately it protects your internal plumbing system and the public water supply from potential health risks.

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HOW OFTEN DOES A BACKFLOW PREVENTER NEED TO BE TESTED?

Each backflow preventer must be tested once every twelve (12) months after the previous test date. For example, if your preventer was tested in May, it must be tested by the last day of May the following year.

CAN ANYONE TEST A BACKFLOW PREVENTER?

No. A backflow preventer must be tested by an Ohio Department of Commerce certified backflow tester. If you need a list of certified testers, please contact the Department of Public Service.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE PREVENTER HAS BEEN TESTED?

The backflow tester should give you a copy of the test report. It is your responsibility to keep records of all tests and maintenance performed on your backflow preventer. The backflow testing company will also submit a copy of the test report to the City once the tester has returned to the office and logged the report.



IS A BACKFLOW PREVENTER REQUIRED ON ALL RESIDENTIAL IRRIGATION SYSTEMS?

Yes. City Code requires a backflow preventer to be installed on any cross connection including residential irrigation systems.



WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SPRING STARTUP AND A BACKFLOW TEST?

A spring startup service is performed on the irrigation system as whole to check for leaks, clogs, etc. A backflow test is performed on the preventer itself to ensure it is working properly.

WHAT IF MY BACKFLOW PREVENTER IS DUE TO BE TESTED BEFORE I WANT TO TURN ON MY IRRIGATION SYSTEM FOR THE SEASON OR HAVE THE SPRING STARTUP SERVICE PERFORMED?

Each backflow preventer must be tested once every twelve (12) months after the previous test date, regardless of when the irrigation system is planned to be turned on or the startup service will be performed. For example, if your preventer was tested in May, it must be tested by the last day of May the following year. It is your responsibility to coordinate the preventer test and spring startup service with your irrigation company to ensure EPA regulations and testing timelines are met each year. The date of the spring startup may vary from year to year due to the weather but unfortunately the backflow test cannot. Testing the preventer once every twelve (12) months after the previous test date is a firm deadline. If your irrigation company will be turning on the system earlier than normal, it is recommended that you coordinate with them to have the spring startup performed but delay the backflow test until the month it is actually due to be tested. That way you can ensure your testing month remains the same each year regardless of when your system is turned on. For example, if your preventer was tested in May the previous year, but your system is turned on in March; you will want to instruct your irrigation company to perform the spring startup in March and then come back in May to test the backflow preventer.

CAN I HAVE MY BACKFLOW PREVENTER TESTED AT THE SAME TIME THAT THE SPRING STARTUP SERVICE IS PERFORMED?

Yes, as long as the spring startup service falls within the testing month for the backflow preventer. Depending on the maintenance plan you have with your irrigation company, the backflow testing may or may not be included with the spring startup service. You will need to confirm this with your irrigation company. If the backflow test is not included in your maintenance plan, you will need to specifically state to your irrigation company that a backflow test needs to be done in addition to the spring startup service.

WHY DID TWO PEOPLE COME OUT AND PERFORM MY SPRING STARTUP SERVICE AND BACKFLOW TEST?

Since the backflow preventer must be tested by a certified tester, the irrigation company may send two employees to perform service on your irrigation system. One employee may not be a certified tester; therefore, he/she will only perform the spring startup service. The other employee that is a certified tester will test the backflow preventer. These services may occur on the same day or possibly on different days.

AM I STILL REQUIRED TO HAVE THE BACKFLOW PREVENTER TESTED EVEN IF I DO NOT USE MY IRRIGATION SYSTEM?

Yes. Since the irrigation system is still physically connected to the public water supply, there is a potential for backflow to occur. Due to this reason, the backflow preventer must be tested once every twelve (12) months after the previous test date regardless if you use the irrigation system or not.

WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS IF I DO NOT WANT TO HAVE MY BACKFLOW PREVENTER TESTED EVERY YEAR?

The only option to be exempt from backflow testing requirements is to hire a contractor to "cut and cap" the physical water line extending to the irrigation system. This process disconnects the irrigation system and creates a physical break in the water pipe. Since there is no potential for the water to flow backwards into the public water supply, you would not be required to have the backflow preventer tested. The City must inspect the cut and cap once it is complete to make sure everything was done properly. There is no charge for this inspection. Upon inspection approval, the irrigation system is marked as inactive in the backflow compliance system. Keep in mind that hiring a contractor to perform this service may be initially more expensive than having the backflow preventer tested. If you change your mind and want to use the system in the future, you would need to hire a contractor to come back out and reconnect the system. In addition, you must notify the City since the backflow preventer would require annual testing thereafter.