

A Consumer's Guide to Backflow Prevention in Texas

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality requires all community water systems to maintain a cross-connection control program for protection of the system that distributes drinking water to your home or business.

The cross-connection control program includes:

- Inspections of the customer's private plumbing to identify and prevent cross-connections, and potential contamination, including contamination by illegal materials containing lead.
- Required installation and testing of backflow-prevention assemblies where appropriate.

The costs associated with the program are borne by the customer.

Some public water systems are subject to a plumbing code that may have more stringent requirements than the TCEQ. TCEQ regulations are a minimum.

What is a cross-connection?

A physical connection between drinkable water and a liquid or gas that could make the water unsafe to drink. Wherever there is a cross-connection, there is a potential threat to public health from the liquid or gas contaminants.

What is backflow?

Water flowing in the opposite of its intended direction, either from a loss of pressure in the supply lines or an increase in pressure on the customer's side.

Common cross-connections:

- Garden hose: Backflow through cross-connections can occur at your home if you leave a garden hose turned on and submerged in a swimming pool, or insert it into your car's radiator to flush out the antifreeze, or attach it to an insecticide sprayer. That material could siphon back into your drinkable water.
- Private well: Backflow can also occur if a pump supplied from an untreated water supply, such as a private well, were connected to the drinkable water supply. The untreated water could be pumped into the drinkable water supply which serves your home and the public water system.
- Lawn sprinkler system: TCEQ regulations require that all lawn sprinkler systems be connected through a mechanical backflow-prevention assembly—without which, the stagnant water from the sprinkler system could be drawn into the drinkable water supply for your home.

How can backflow be prevented?

Backflow into a potable-water system can be prevented using an assembly approved by the water supplier, or a physical separation between the water supply and a potential source of pollution. The water supplier determines the type of backflow-prevention assembly required, based on the existing or potential degree of hazard.

Testing backflow prevention assemblies

The TCEQ requires testing of all backflow prevention assemblies at installation by a TCEQ-licensed tester. Backflow-prevention assemblies installed to protect against any substance that can make you sick must be tested annually.

How can I find out more information about backflow?

For more information about backflow and cross-connection control, visit <www.tceq.state.tx.us/goto/cc>.



Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

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