

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is a Cross Connection?

A. A cross connection is a permanent or temporary connection between potable drinking water and anything which can pollute or contaminate the water supply.

Q. What is Cross Connection Control?

A. Cross connection control is, simply a program that is designed to take the safeguards necessary to protect one of the worlds most essential assets..... water. Only through education and the combined cooperation, of the public and the water purveyor, can we insure a safe supply of drinking water.

Q. What is backflow?

A. Tallahassee's Water distribution system is designed to keep the water flowing from the distribution system to you the customer. However, when hydraulic conditions within the system deviate from the "normal" conditions, water flow can be reversed. When this backflow happens, contaminated water can enter the distribution system.

Q. What causes backflow?

A. Backflow is possible in two situations, backsiphonage and backpressure. Backsiphonage occurs when there is a sudden reduction in the water pressure in the distribution system, such as during firefighting or when a water main breaks, water flow can be reversed. This can create a suction effect, drawing the non potable substance into the potable water system. Backpressure is created when pressure in a nonpotable system, such as in a recirculating system containing soap, acid, or antifreeze, exceeds that in the potable system that provides make up water to the system. This can force the potable water to reverse its direction of flow through the cross connection. Nonpotable substances can then enter the potable water system.

Q. How can backflow be prevented?

A. The City of Tallahassee recognizes four methods of backflow prevention:

- Air Gap
- Double Check Valve Assembly
- Reduced Pressure Principal Assembly
- Pressure Vacuum Breaker Assembly

The Cross Connection Control Section of the Water Quality Division will determine which type of protection is required based on the degree of hazard that the property represents to the potable water supply.

Q. What is a backflow assembly?

A. A backflow prevention assembly is an approved, testable assembly which uses valves, in different configurations, to prevent polluted or contaminated water from reversing direction and flowing backward.

Q. How is an assembly approved?

A. An approved backflow prevention assembly has gone through an approval process at the Foundation for Hydraulic Research and Cross Connection Control at the University of Southern California. This is a two step process consisting of laboratory tests and a twelve month field test. Only assemblies completing the entire testing procedure are recognized by The City of Tallahassee as approved backflow prevention assemblies.

Q. How do I know if I need a backflow prevention assembly?

A. A member of the Cross Connection Control Staff will visit your property to do an evaluation for backflow requirements. You will receive a letter providing you with the guidelines and what action you need to take to insure compliance with the City of Tallahassee's requirements

Q. Is there a general compliance schedule and process?

A. Yes. Unless you make other arrangements with the City of Tallahassee Cross Connection Control Section, the backflow assembly must be in compliance within 45 days from the date of the initial compliance notification. Upon failure to install you will receive a follow up notice. And if after 90 days, you have not responded, you will receive a notice informing you that your water service may be discontinued unless you achieve compliance. If at any time during this process you have a problem meeting this compliance schedule, it is extremely important that you contact the Cross Connection Control Section immediately, at 891-1247, and make special arrangements for an extension.

Q. Who can install a backflow prevention assembly?

A. The installation of the backflow prevention assembly is the responsibility of the customer. The assembly may be installed by a property owner, plumbing contractor, or a general contractor, subject to the Code of Ordinance of the City of Tallahassee, Florida, Chapter 7, Building and Construction. Permits are required to install these assemblies. Permits are issued by The City of Tallahassee Building Inspection Department. Please call 891-7083 for additional information on permits.

Q. Where should a backflow prevention assembly be located?

A. Generally, the backflow prevention assembly must be located as close as possible to the water service connection (typically not to exceed 5 feet), but must remain on private property. Contact the City of Tallahassee Cross Connection Control Section for information on variances.

Q. Who is responsible for the testing and maintenance of the backflow assembly?

A. It is the sole responsibility of the customer to ensure that the assembly is in satisfactory operating condition at all times. The City of Tallahassee Cross Connection Control Section will send notices to the customer advising them when an annual test is required on their backflow assembly. The customer must contact a recognized Backflow Assembly Tester to perform the test. If any repair work or maintenance is performed on the assembly, a recognized Tester must retest the assembly immediately and submit the test results to the Cross Connection Control Section.

Q. How do I find an approved Certified Tester?

A. The City of Tallahassee's list of recognized Assembly Testers can be obtained here or be provided upon request from the Cross Connection Control Section. Due to the fact that test prices vary among testers, you may want to call several Certified Testers to obtain quotes for your test.