



AMERICAN BACKFLOW PREVENTION ASSOCIATION PROTECTING YOUR WATER AGAINST CONTAMINATION

AN INTRODUCTION TO CROSS CONNECTION CONTROL

The Town of Collierville proudly supplies an average of 6.5 to 7 million gallons of water per day that exceeds the requirements of the EPA to its citizens. Before the water is pumped to your home or business, it goes through careful treatment and numerous tests to ensure its quality.

Did you know that your tap water (drinking water) has to meet standards that exceed those for bottle water? Unlike tap water, the quality of finished bottled water is not government-monitored. You don't need to buy bottled water in the Town of Collierville for safety reasons because our tap water exceeds federal and state drinking water standards.

Congress established the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) in 1974 to protect human health from contaminants in drinking water and to prevent contamination of existing groundwater supplies. This act and its amendments require many actions to protect drinking water and its sources. One of these actions is the ***installation and maintenance of an approved backflow prevention assembly at the water service connection whenever a potential hazard is determined to exist in the customer's system.*** Without proper protection devices, cross connections can occur.

What is cross connection? A connection between your drinking water and another source of water that combines the two when a backflow condition occurs. When this occurs, your drinking water can become contaminated.

What is backflow? Backflow is when the water in your pipes (the pipes after the water meter) goes backward (the opposite direction from its normal flow). There are two situations that can cause the water to go backward (backflow):

- *Backpressure* – the pressure in your pipes is greater than the pressure coming in.
- *Backsiphonage* – a negative pressure in one of the pipes.

To protect the water system, two kinds of ***backflow prevention assemblies*** (devices that prevent the backflow of water) are required for all business customers that present a potential hazard to the Town's water system:

- *External* – to protect the Town's water from cross connection with the water on customer's premises.
- *Internal* – to protect the customer from potentially hazardous cross connection in his own system.

What is considered a potential hazard? ANY possibility of pollutants, contaminants, and system or plumbing hazards. For example: fire protection systems, irrigation systems, gasoline refineries and stations, restaurants, hospitals, and manufacturers. Just to name a few.

To keep your drinking water safe, we diligently check the plans of each new business for compliance with cross connection/backflow requirements. We make sure all external backflow prevention assemblies are tested and repaired annually. The Town of Collierville sends notices and test forms for completion requiring the annual testing and repair of all internal backflow prevention assemblies.

We take pride in the water we provide and will continue to protect it and our citizens.

Now that you have some background, you may ask... What's the big deal? Well, the big deal is that the backflows due to cross connections can cause sickness and death. Even in your own home, you can unwittingly create a cross connection:

- Putting the garden hose in a swimming pool to fill it;
- Putting the garden hose in a pet's water bucket to fill it, or the fish tank;
- Putting the garden hose down the drain to flush out the debris when it's backed up;
- Connecting your garden hose to a plant fertilizer or bug spray unit.

Over half of the nations cross connections involve unprotected garden hoses.

In Kansas, a man died from drinking out of his garden hose. He had been spraying the yard with poison to get rid of bugs and had connected his garden hose to the spraying device. Unknown to him, during the spraying, a drop in pressure occurred in the main water system causing the poisoned water to backflow into the house, enough to kill him when he took a drink from the garden hose after spraying. This man had contaminated his own water system.

We, your Water department, protect the water entering your system. However, it is your responsibility to protect the water on your property or in your home. If you need information on what you can do to protect it or have any questions, please call 901-457-2800. We will be glad to assist you.

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