

Frequently Asked Questions about Backflow Prevention

Every day, the Village of Skokie proudly supplies an average of 8.5 million gallons of water to its citizens; water that exceeds the minimum quality requirements of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Before the water is pumped to your home or business, it has gone through careful treatment and numerous tests to ensure its quality. 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 (1986 and 1996) 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 a customer's system. Without proper protection devices, cross connections can occur. The following are frequently asked questions regarding the Village of Skokie's program to prevent backflow contamination of the water supply.

What is a cross-connection?

A cross-connection is a connection between a public water system and a non-potable (non-drinkable) source of possibly contaminated water or other fluid. If such a connection exists and is not properly controlled, contaminants could make their way from a non-potable source into the potable water supply should a backflow occur. Because of the risk of contamination such systems typically require the installation and proper maintenance of a backflow prevention assembly. Examples of cross connections are the connections between the drinking water system and lawn sprinkler systems and outdoor pools in residential settings and kitchens, laundry equipment, carbonators on drink dispensers and fire suppression systems in commercial and institutional settings.

What is backflow?

Under normal conditions, water from the distribution system flows into a consumer's premises. When backflow occurs, water flows from the consumer's premises back into the distribution system.

How does backflow occur?

Backflow occurs when the water pressure in the consumer's premises is higher than the pressure in the water distribution system. This condition can be caused by a drop in water pressure in the distribution system or by the presence of systems within a consumer's premises that operate at higher pressures than that of the distribution system.

What is a backflow prevention assembly?

A backflow prevention assembly is a mechanical device that prevents water from flowing backwards.

How often must a backflow prevention assembly be tested?

Assemblies must be tested when installed and once a year thereafter.

Who can test backflow preventers?

Any licensed plumber who is certified by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency as a Cross Connection Device Inspector (CCDI) is acceptable.

Why have I received a letter from BSI, Inc. reminding me that my backflow assembly must be inspected rather than the Village?

The Village has hired BSI, Inc. to manage the Village's backflow inspection program, including maintaining records. Because of the large number of assemblies in the Village it is more economical and efficient to have BSI run the program. BSI is a company that has a vast experience in managing such systems and provides its services to numerous communities in the Chicago area and Illinois. BSI will contact assembly owners when an annual inspection is required.

How do I change the contact information for a backflow prevention assembly on my property?

To change the contact name or telephone number for a backflow prevention assembly, the customer may contact BSI, Inc. at (800) 414-4990.

Who is responsible for sending in the completed "Backflow Prevention Assembly Test Report" forms?

The tester is responsible for returning the original, signed test reports to BSI, Inc., either by mail or email of a high-quality scan. The test reports must be submitted within five calendar days of the test date. Testers should provide their customers with proof that the forms have been submitted as required.

What if my backflow prevention assembly fails the test?

If an assembly fails, it must be repaired or replaced. Replacement of an assembly requires a plumbing permit from the Building and Zoning Division (847) 933-8223.

What happens if I don't have my assembly tested?

If assembly test results are not received by the end of the month in which testing is required, BSI, Inc. will send you a second notice requiring testing within 30-days. If you do not have your backflow prevention assembly tested, further action will include citations, with a maximum daily fine of \$750 per day, and potentially the termination of water service until the required actions have taken place.

How do I get a backflow prevention assembly removed?

Removal, replacement, or relocation of a backflow prevention assembly requires a plumbing permit from the Building and Zoning Division. The removal of an assembly is not allowed until an inspection is conducted by the Village and a determination is made that the assembly is no longer needed.

I have several backflow prevention assemblies with different test dates: How can I get them tested at the same time?

If you would like to synchronize the test due dates for several assemblies on different water meters, or at your property, please contact BSI, Inc. at (800) 414-4990.

I received a cross connection survey on my water usage at my facility/home. What is this about?

The Village conducts periodic surveys to identify and eliminate possible sources of cross connections to help ensure the safety of the public water supply. The information collected through the surveys helps to identify where backflow prevention devices may be needed as well as providing information on existing devices that may not have been previously submitted to the water company.

Who pays for the testing and how much does it cost?

It is the responsibility of the property owner to pay testing and any required repairs to the backflow device.

Who should I call if I have if I have additional question?

If you have any questions regarding the backflow prevention program please call the Building and Zoning Division at 847-933-8223.

What regulations authorize Skokie's Cross-Connection Control Program?

Cross-connection control is required by federal, state and local regulations, as summarized below:

- Federal: Safe Drinking Water Act (1974, amended 1986 and 1996) and Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1986.
- State of Illinois: in Title 35 of the Illinois Administrative Code.
- State of Illinois Plumbing Code
- Local: Skokie Village Code.

