

Cross-Connection Control and Backflow Prevention

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a cross-connection?

A cross-connection is a point in a plumbing system where it is possible for a non-potable substance to come into contact with the potable drinking water supply. Common examples of cross-connections include a garden hose submerged in a pesticide mixture, a piped connection providing potable feed water to an industrial process, such as a cooling tower or a submerged outlet of an irrigation system.

What is a backflow assembly?

Backflow assemblies are devices designed to prevent potentially contaminated water from flowing back into the public water system.

Where are the most common cross-connections found?

Whenever a plumbing fixture is connected to the drinking water supply, a potential for cross-connection exists. Fortunately, many plumbing fixtures have built-in backflow protection. Here are some examples of cross-connections that can lead to backflow to the public water system:

- Wash basins and service sinks.
- Food and beverage processing equipment.
- Laboratory equipment.
- Irrigation or lawn sprinkler systems.
- Swimming pools, spas and ornamental fountains.
- Solar heat systems and boilers.
- Fire sprinkler systems.
- Auxiliary water supplies (wells, storage tanks and second feeds).
- Attachment to hoses for applying weed killer/fertilizer or to flush antifreeze.

How can I help prevent a dangerous backflow situation?

Working with the Cross-Connection Control Program, you can eliminate cross-connections through approved methods and by installing an approved backflow prevention assembly when a potential hazard is found.

Why do I have to install a backflow prevention assembly?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Safe Drinking Water Act, California Department of Public Health and the Uniform Plumbing Code require all sites with potential cross-connections to be equipped with a backflow prevention assembly. The City of San Diego has adopted codes, policies and procedures to ensure compliance with these regulations and to protect the public water system.

Where do I install a backflow device?

It must be installed as close as practical to the water meter, as approved by the Public Utilities Department. This reduces the chance of an unprotected/unauthorized connection being made between the meter and the backflow device.

Does my backflow assembly need to be tested?

Annual testing is required at the same time each year and it is your responsibility to schedule your annual testing with your approved tester. The City of San Diego requires that an approved tester certifies all backflow assemblies at the time of installation, annually after installation and anytime the assembly is depressurized. Backflow assembly testers are private contractors who must report the test results to the City.

Who is on the City of San Diego’s tester list?

The list consists of approved testers certified by the American Water Works Association or the American Backflow Prevention Association to be a backflow tester. There is no fee to be on the list and anyone with these certifications can fill out an application to be included. The list is available on the City’s website at www.sandiego.gov/public-utilities/permits-construction/construction-and-development/backflow.

Will the City notify me of my annual backflow test date?

The Cross Connection Control Program provides courtesy annual backflow test reminders as shown in the table on the next page. Failure to receive a courtesy notification does not exempt you from annual testing requirements.

Timeline

First notice mailed	30 days before due date
Second notice mailed	15 days before due date
Five-day notice of water service termination mailed	Due date
Water service terminated. The City may also pursue other options to achieve compliance (administrative citation, civil penalties).	Any time after due date

Where will my annual testing notification be mailed?

Your annual testing reminder will be mailed to the billing address used for your City of San Diego water utility bill unless you have provided a different mailing address to the Cross-Connection Control Program (CCCP) using the official [Mailing Address Update Form](#). Please note, if you prefer to utilize an address other than your normal billing address, it is your responsibility to notify the CCCP of any changes. Failure to provide the CCCP with updated mailing information will not prevent the CCCP from terminating water service due to non-compliance with annual testing requirements.

Why am I’m being notified to retroactively install a backflow prevention assembly?

The City of San Diego is notifying customers with facilities that don’t meet current City code requirements (DI55.21). The City of San Diego Public Utilities’ Cross Connection Control Program will be conducting Hazard Assessment Surveys to identify these facilities.

How much will this upgrade cost?

Your cost will be determined by the conditions at your location. The Public Utilities Department understands that there will be a significant cost to this upgrade and the City wants to provide you with as much information and assistance as possible. The Public Utilities Department suggests you obtain multiple bids to complete the upgrade. For general information, contact the Cross-Connection Control Program at Crossconnect@sandiego.gov or 858-292-6329.

Who can complete this upgrade?

A certified licensed plumber can complete the requested backflow installation, for your convenience please visit our website www.sandiego.gov/public-utilities/permits-construction/construction-and-development/backflow to obtain a list of approved backflow testers and plumbing companies.

What happens if I do not perform the upgrade or do not meet the deadline?

As a requirement set by the State Water Resource Control Board, the City will be reporting to the state on our progress and enforcement actions for non-compliant customers. Non-compliant customers can potentially receive monetary citations and or water termination to their facility.

Where can I access additional information and assistance?

Personalized notifications will be sent to affected customers who are required to upgrade existing backflow assemblies to current City standards. Within the notifications provided, there will be links to the Public Utilities' [Cross-Connection Control Program webpage](#) and the [Development Services Department website](#) that include more details. For general information, contact the Cross-Connection Control Program at Crossconnect@sandiego.gov or 858-292-6329.

Where can I find the relevant regulations and policies regarding Cross-Connection Control and Backflow prevention?

- Code of Federal Regulations, Safe Drinking Water Act of 1986.
- Code of California Regulations Title 17 and Title 22.
- State of California Water Code, Chapter 1, Section 110, Chapter 8, Section 500 and Chapter 723, Sections 13553, 13554.2, and 13554.3.
- State of California Health and Safety Code Section 13114.7.
- California Plumbing Code (CPC).
- California Fire Code (CFC).
- City of San Diego Municipal Code (MC) Chapter IV, Article 4, Section 44.00 and Chapter VI, Article 7, Section 67.00.
- City of San Diego Fire-Rescue Department: www.sandiego.gov/fire.

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