



What's a  
Backflow  
Prevention  
Device?

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

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*BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE MEMBERS OF THE  
TENNESSEE BACKFLOW PREVENTION  
ASSOCIATION, THE TENNESSEE ASSOCIATION  
OF UTILITY DISTRICTS AND MALLORY VALLEY  
UTILITY DISTRICT*

## WHAT IS BACKFLOW?

Backflow is the undesirable reversal of water from its intended direction in any pipeline or plumbing system. Backflow is dangerous because it can allow drinking water in plumbing systems to become contaminated and unusable.

## WHAT IS A BACKFLOW PREVENTION DEVICE?

Backflow prevention devices are mechanical plumbing devices installed in a plumbing system to prevent water from flowing backward in the system. A properly installed, tested and maintained backflow device at the service entrance to a building or property can reliably prevent the backflow of water of an unknown quality from flowing back into the community water system.

## IS IT REALLY IMPORTANT TO PREVENT BACKFLOW?

Absolutely. The Tennessee Division of Water Supply requires all public water systems in the state to operate an on-going program to protect the public water supply from contamination from possible cross connections or backflow. The most effective method for the water utility to meet this requirement is to require customers to install a backflow prevention device on the main supply line to their property or facility, thus protecting the community water system from any cross connections or backflow that may be present inside a customer's plumbing system. All water users benefit from an active, on-going cross connection ...

## IS IT REALLY IMPORTANT TO PREVENT BACKFLOW? (Continued)

... that includes the installation of backflow prevention devices where required by the state regulations and local codes.

## WHY DOES THE CUSTOMER HAVE TO PAY FOR AND INSTALL THE BACKFLOW PREVENTION DEVICE?

The backflow prevention device is installed to protect the PUBLIC water supply against possible hazards in the CUSTOMER'S plumbing system. The actual or potential cross connection belongs to the property owner and not to regulatory officials or the water utility. Once the water goes beyond the meter, in many cases the water quality is altered. The water utility does not want the water back, nor do other water customers want to purchase used water. If a backflow device is required to keep the water safe, then the person who purchased, installed and maintained the cross connection (actual or potential) should purchase, install and maintain the backflow device.

## DEFINITION OF CROSS CONNECTION

Any pipe, valve, fixture, etc., in a drinking water plumbing system that may allow the drinking water within the system to become contaminated or questionable in quality. Cross connections can either be eliminated...

## DEFINITION OF CROSS CONNECTION (Continued)

... or protected by an air gap or mechanical backflow prevention device. Unprotected cross connections are prohibited by state regulations, plumbing codes and local codes. Consult your local water utility for proper methods of cross connection control.

TENNESSEE CODE ANNOTATED, SECTION 68-221-711 AND SECTION 1200-5-1-17(6) OF THE TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT GOVERN PUBLIC WATER SYSTEMS AND ENFORCE THE USE THE USE OF THE CROSS CONNECTION PLAN.

**WHILE THIS ONLY APPLIES TO ALL COMMERCIAL CUSTOMERS AND ONLY RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMERS WITH AND IRRIGATION SYSTEMS MALLORY VALLEY UTILITY DISTRICT IS STILL REQUIRED TO NOTIFY EACH CUSTOMER THAT WE HAVE A CURRENT CROSS CONNECTION PLAN IN PLACE.**

## PLEASE NOTE:

EVERY EFFORT WILL BE MADE TO SECURE THE VOLUNTARY COOPERATION OF THE CUSTOMER IN CORRECTING CROSS CONNECTION HAZARDS. HOWEVER, IF VOLUNTARY ACTION CANNOT BE OBTAINED WITHIN A REASONABLE PERIOD OF TIME, WATER SERVICE MAY BE DISCONTINUED FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF THE OTHER CUSTOMERS IN THE DISTRICT.