

Frequently Asked Questions

1. *I received a letter saying my annual backflow test is due. What do I need to do?*
Contact your annual Backflow Tester or choose a tester from our **Approved Backflow Tester List** to schedule your test. After completing the test, the tester or testing company will submit the results to the City of Cottonwood.
2. *I'm a renter. Why did I receive a notice about the backflow test?* **Compliance with the City of Cottonwood's backflow requirements is the responsibility of the water account holder.** If you are renting a home or commercial space, the property owner/landlord or property management company may take care of the backflow installation and/or annual testing, but it is ultimately the account holder's responsibility.
3. *I received a letter saying I need to install a backflow preventer. How do I do that?*
Contacting a licensed plumber is our recommendation. While you can install a backflow prevention assembly yourself, it must be installed according to manufacturer's specifications and will be inspected by the City of Cottonwood to determine if the installation is correct. Once installed and inspected by the City, the final step is to have it tested by a tester from our **Approved Backflow Tester List**.
4. *Why are Backflow prevention devices tested annually?* Backflow assemblies have internal springs, seals and moving parts that are susceptible to wear and failure. Annual tests ensure they are functioning properly and protecting our public water system.
5. *Do backflow testers work for the City of Cottonwood?* No – they are independent private contracts that are approved to test backflow prevention assemblies connected to the City of Cottonwood's water system.
6. *Who should I contact at the City of Cottonwood for more information?* Please call our Cross Connection Control Specialist at (928) 634-0186, ext. 3308 or email dflansburg@cottonwoodaz.gov
7. *How do I know if I need to install a backflow preventer?* Backflow requirements vary for residential customers. Residences with irrigation systems and swimming pools with water auto-fill or auto-leveler devices must have a backflow prevention assembly. Residences with wells on property and an active water meter supplying water to the residence is also required to have a backflow prevention device.

Backflow requirements vary for commercial customers based on the business's water use and will be determined on a case by case basis.

8. *What is backflow?* Backflow is the undesirable reversal of the flow of from a possible source of contamination (water or mixture of water and other liquids, gasses, or other substances) into the potable water system. Backflow prevention devices protect plumbing systems and the public water supply by preventing backflow.
9. *What is a cross-connection?* A cross-connection is any physical or potential connection, whether permanent or not, between the public potable water system and a possible source of contamination such as non-potable water, industrial fluid, gas, or other substances.
10. *What causes backflow?* Backflow is caused by pressure changes, including conditions of gravity, vacuum or other pressure changes. Two factors contribute to the reversal of flow in pipelines. One is back siphonage and the other is backpressure.

Back siphonage conditions exist when there is a negative or sub-atmospheric pressure in the supply piping, allowing downstream substances to be siphoned into the potable water supply. Under-sized pipes, pipeline breaks, and high withdrawal rates can create vacuums, which contribute to the occurrence of back siphonage.

Backpressure conditions exist when a pressure higher than the supply is created in the downstream piping, allowing downstream substances to be pushed into the potable water supply. Backpressure can occur when higher pressures downstream are generated by pumps, thermal expansion, and elevation.

11. *What can I do to protect my home plumbing system from backflow?* Install hose-bib vacuum breakers on each of your outside water spigots. These devices will prevent water from being back-siphoned from a hose or irrigation system into your home's plumbing. Hose-bib vacuum breakers are available at hardware stores.
12. *A backflow preventer was already installed when I moved into this home / commercial space, but I don't think I need it. What should I do?* Different customers present different backflow hazards, even at the same location. If your water use is different than the last customer, please contact us for more information and an assessment whether the backflow prevention assembly is necessary and should remain.
13. *I don't use my irrigation system. Do I still have to maintain my backflow prevention assembly and have it tested annually?* As long as the irrigation system is connected to your plumbing system or the City water supply, the potential for backflow exists and you must comply with all backflow requirements, including annual testing. To eliminate

these backflow requirements, the irrigation system must be physically disconnected from your plumbing system.

If your irrigation system is served by the same water service that serves your home or business, you can have the irrigation system cut and capped. Once this is complete, contact us to schedule an inspection.

If your irrigation system is served by a separate water meter, contact us to close the account and we will lock and/or remove the meter. If the meter is not removed and only locked, the backflow assembly must be tested when water service is re-established to the meter.