

Backflow Prevention Fact Sheet

Colorado Springs Utilities is committed to the safety of our community's drinking water. As part of that effort, state and local regulations require Utilities to ensure that all commercial and multi-family properties have functioning backflow prevention assemblies.

Q: What is backflow and backflow prevention?

A: Backflow occurs when water flowing from the water distribution system to a commercial business reverses direction and flows backward into the water distribution system. This reversal may carry pollutants or contaminants from the business customer's processes into the water distribution system. An approved backflow prevention assembly prevents water and contaminants from the customer's business from entering the water distribution system.

Q: What is a backflow prevention assembly?

A: A backflow prevention assembly is a specialized unit installed in water systems that allows water to flow only from the water distribution system to the customer. Commercial and multi-family dwelling customers are required to have these assemblies in operation. Installation operation and maintenance is the responsibility of the customer.

Q: How will customers know if they need to install a backflow prevention assembly?

A: Utilities will survey all commercial customers by the end of 2020 and will let customers know what they need to do to come into compliance. All plumbing changes to accommodate compliance requirements must be performed by a licensed plumbing contractor using a permit under a Pikes Peak Regional Building Department permit.

Q: Why do customers need to test their backflow assembly/method?

A: State and local regulations require that assemblies be tested annually. Assemblies and methods that protect our water distribution system from backflow can fail. Regular testing helps ensure that the assembly/method is in proper working order.

Q: When do customers need to test?

A: Backflow assemblies must to be tested upon installation, and annually thereafter. Utilities tracks these assemblies and notifies customers when it is time to test.

Q: How do customers arrange for testing?

A: They should contact a Certified Backflow Prevention Tester. Testers can be found online or in the telephone directory. Testers must be certified to complete the required processes and provide compliance information to Utilities.

Q: Can customers test and/or repair one of these assemblies themselves?

A: Only Certified Backflow Prevention Assembly Testers, with up-to-date certification documents can test and/or repair assemblies.

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Q: What if customers don't arrange for testing?

A: Utilities will partner with customers to ensure that they become compliant. In the worst case, state regulations could require Utilities to disconnect water service to customers until they comply with backflow requirements. Customers may also be subject to additional enforcement, fines and other costs.

Q: What is the process for licensed plumbers to receive approval to install backflow prevention assemblies?

A: To install backflow prevention assemblies, licensed plumbers need a permit issued by Pikes Peak Regional Building Department. Certified plumbers also need to complete a Plan Review form available on the backflow prevention website. More details on the process also are available on the forms and on our website at www.csu.org.