

## ***FAQ – CROSS CONNECTION CONTROL PROGRAM***

**QUESTION:** What is the purpose of Cross Connection Control?

**ANSWER:** The purpose of the City of Olathe’s Cross Connection Control Program is to assure customers that the last user on our water distribution lines has water that is just as safe as the first user, and nothing harmful has entered the system in between.

**QUESTION:** What is a cross connection?

**ANSWER:** A cross connection is any actual or potential connection between the public water supply and a source of contamination or pollution, where there is potential for contaminants to enter the city’s water supply.

**QUESTION:** What is backflow?

**ANSWER:** A reversal in the direction of the normal flow of water in a piping system either through back pressure or back siphoning.

**QUESTION:** What is backpressure?

**ANSWER:** Backpressure is a pressure higher than the supply pressure, caused by a pump, elevated tank, boiler air/steam pressure, or any other means, which may cause backflow.

**QUESTION:** What is backsiphonage?

**ANSWER:** Backsiphonage is a type of backflow where the upstream pressure to a piping system is reduced to a sub atmospheric pressure.

**QUESTION:** What is a backflow preventer?

**ANSWER:** An assembly, device or method that prevents water from flowing back into the closed water system thus preventing impurities or contaminants from being drawn into the safe drinking water supply.

**QUESTION:** My system has been installed for several years and this is the first time I have received a letter. How did the City know I had an irrigation system?

**ANSWER:** City personnel do inspections daily. If there is any indication of an irrigation system (i.e. very green grass, backflow preventer, or sprinkler heads), the information will be given to the Cross Connection Coordinator for further review.

**QUESTION:** My neighbor has a lawn irrigation system and has never received a letter.

**ANSWER:** The city staff does regular inspections to identify lawn irrigation systems. However, some may not be highly visible. If we receive information (i.e. an address or name), we will conduct a closer inspection to verify the presence of an irrigation system and will update our database. As always your information will not be mentioned when notifying another resident,

**QUESTION:** Is the Cross Connection Control Program a new requirement?

**ANSWER:** The city has had a requirement to install & test backflow preventers since 1993 when the first version of the Cross Connection Control Ordinance was adopted.

**QUESTION:** Why is annual testing required?

**ANSWER:** To ensure that the installed backflow preventer is functioning properly. Mechanical backflow preventers are an assembly with springs and moving parts and are used in situations where an air gap cannot be used. Over time and continuous wear, these assemblies will fail testing, or need parts replaced. When an assembly fails, it is no longer preventing backflow from occurring. Annual testing and inspection insures that the assemblies are kept in working condition.

**QUESTION:** Before moving to Olathe, I resided in an area that was serviced by Water One of Johnson County. They did not enforce annual testing for backflow prevention devices on lawn irrigation systems, so why does Olathe?

**ANSWER:** Lawn irrigation systems are considered “high risk” cross-connections because a backflow incident could introduce fertilizers, pesticides, or other lawn chemicals into the drinking water system. To prevent this and keep the water safe, the City adopted requirements to ensure safe, quality drinking water that is free from any contaminants.

**QUESTION:** Who is responsible for making sure the device is tested?

**ANSWER:** The property owner is responsible to have the device tested on time. The water purveyor is tasked by state law to maintain the records of backflow preventers and make sure testing gets done annually.

**QUESTION:** If City ordinance requires testing, why doesn't the City provide testing?

**ANSWER:** Recently, a change was made to the City of Olathe Ordinance allowing a contractor to go onto property and test backflow preventer(s) installed for those who do not comply with the ordinance. The charge will be added to your water bill.

**QUESTION:** Who can test backflow preventer devices?

**ANSWER:** Only a certified backflow tester can test backflow preventers. A 40-hour training course with a test is required to become certified.

**QUESTION:** I am interested in becoming a certified backflow preventer tester. Who can I contact for information?

**ANSWER:** Kansas Department of Health & Environment (KDHE) (785) 296-5511, Fort Scott Community College (316) 223-2700, Kansas Rural Water Association (KRWA) (785) 336-3760, Kansas City Backflow – Contact: K-Cee Colburn (816) 880-0578, Johnson County Community College (JCCC) (913) 469-8500

**QUESTION:** Where can I find a certified backflow tester and how much does it cost?

**ANSWER:** Most local plumbing and irrigation contractors have certified testers who can perform the test. There is a partial list of certified testers on the City website [www.olatheks.org/OMS/Water/Backflow](http://www.olatheks.org/OMS/Water/Backflow). This list includes fee survey results. If a company that you would like to use is not on the list, you may give us a call to make sure they are certified at (913) 971-9055. The City of Olathe does not recommend or endorse any particular company or tester and the online list is provided as a convenience to our customers only. Customers are advised to perform their own due diligence before hiring someone to complete testing on their device.

**QUESTION:** When is the best time to have the backflow preventer device tested?

**ANSWER:** The City of Olathe would like all backflows installed on irrigation systems to be tested in the spring when the system is activated. This insures that the system is operating properly when the lawn irrigation system is being used.

**QUESTION:** My lawn irrigation system is currently “inactive”.....do I still need to have the backflow preventer tested?

**ANSWER:** *If it is only turned off at the valve, a test is still required.* If it is permanently disconnected from the water supply, see the next question.

**QUESTION:** My irrigation system has been disconnected or removed – what do I need to do?

**ANSWER:** A plumbing permit needs to be obtained from building codes. An inspector will come out to make sure your irrigation system is capped off and will then notify our Cross Connection Control Program Coordinator so the record(s) can be updated. It is recommended that you follow up with us to be sure the disconnect information was received. Future re-activation will require a cross-connection permit to be pulled as though it were a new irrigation system.

**QUESTION:** I don't want to use my sprinkler system anymore. What can I do so I don't need to have the backflow tested?

**ANSWER:** As long as you are the homeowner and residing at the residence you can remove the backflow and cap the system off. If not, a licensed plumber needs to come out, remove the backflow, and cap off the system so it can't be easily hooked back up. A plumbing permit needs to be obtained from our Building Codes Division, 1225 S Hamilton Cir, inside the Fire Administration building before the work is started. Documentation will need to be submitted stating that the sprinkler system has been disconnected.

**QUESTION:** I want to install a lawn irrigation system at my residence, what do I need to do?

**ANSWER:** A cross connection permit is required and may be obtained from the Building Codes Division, 1225 S Hamilton Cir, inside the Fire Administration building.

**QUESTION:** Who can install the irrigation system?

**ANSWER:** You as the homeowner can install the irrigation system. If you have a company install the irrigation system, it is required that they are a Johnson County Licensed Contractor. Anyone can install the backflow preventer as long as it meets the installation requirements of that type of backflow.

**QUESTION:** Who can install the backflow preventer device?

**ANSWER:** Anyone can install the backflow preventer, as long as it is tested by a certified tester upon installation. As a reminder, a new install, or a replacement requires a cross connection permit.

**QUESTION:** What type of backflow preventer does the city require on lawn irrigation systems?

**ANSWER:** Since many lawns have pesticides, fertilizers or other lawn chemicals applied to them, these systems are considered a high risk. Therefore, a pressure vacuum breaker (PVB) or a reduced pressure assembly (RP) is required. **Absolutely no double check's (DC), atmospheric pressure vacuum breakers (AVB), or Dual Checks are allowed to be installed on lawn sprinkler systems. These device types do not meet the International Plumbing Code.**

**QUESTION:** I currently have a Double Check installed on my irrigation system. Do I have to have it changed out now to an approved type?

**ANSWER:** The City of Olathe may grant a variance as long as a letter has been submitted stating that the customer understands that when the double check fails testing or requires **ANY** maintenance, an approved device must be installed using a cross-connection permit from the Building Codes Division, 1225 S Hamilton Cir, inside the Fire Administration building.

**QUESTION:** Does a backflow preventer protect my water supply as well as the City of Olathe?

**ANSWER:** Yes. If a backflow event were to occur, you as the property owner would have the highest likelihood of drinking the contaminated water. That is why the city ordinance requires the backflow preventers be put at each point of potential contamination, not just one at the meter.

**QUESTION:** What are the consequences of failing to have backflow preventer devices installed & tested?

**ANSWER:** The consequences of failing to have a backflow preventer tested by the given due date can include a contractor or a City employee to come out and perform the testing as stated in the City Ordinance, and the fee getting added to your water bill; or the termination of water service.

**QUESTION:** I would like additional information for improving the efficiency of my irrigation system to save water and money in the summer months.

**ANSWER:** Pamphlets providing tips for improving the efficiency of lawn irrigation systems to save water and money are available and can be mailed to the customer's home. Customers may also visit the city's website at [www.olatheks.org/OMS/water/conservation](http://www.olatheks.org/OMS/water/conservation) for additional information.

**QUESTION:** I have received a letter stating that my backflow device is past due for testing and that the city will be performing the testing and charging me a fee on my water bill. Can you explain?

**ANSWER:** The City Council passed a revised Backflow Prevention and Cross Connection Control Ordinance in 2010. As part of that ordinance, the City of Olathe is allowed to charge a fee for delinquent devices. This fee then covers the cost of a certified Olathe employee, or a contractor hired by the city, to perform testing on the device. For questions on this process, please call 913-971-9055.

QUESTION: My house and irrigation system were installed before the Cross Connection Control Ordinance was adopted and the type of backflow preventer is a dual check. What do I need to do?

ANSWER: The City realizes that non-testable devices were installed before the ordinance went into affect. Therefore it is required to install an approved backflow preventer or have your irrigation system disconnected and capped off. Disconnection requires a plumbing permit and installation requires a cross connection permit. Permits can be obtained from our Building Codes Division at 1225 S Hamilton Cir, inside the Fire Administration building.

QUESTION: I noticed that my backflow has been shut off and a yellow DO NOT TURN ON TAG that has been placed on my backflow preventer. What is this tag for and what do I need to do to get this tag removed?

ANSWER: Yellow tags are placed on those backflow preventers that have not been tested as stated in the Olathe Municipal Code. Once the City receives a passing backflow test report, the tag may be removed. Activation of your irrigation system is permitted for testing purposes. Please make sure the City receives the backflow test report within 14 days of testing. Activation of tagged backflow preventer without a passing test report within 14 days can result in the termination of your water service as this creates the potential of a backflow incident.