



Cross-Connection Control and Backflow Prevention Program

FORU Customer FAQ

INITIAL ASSEMBLY TESTING REQUIRED BY SEPTEMBER 30, 2020

Q1. Why did the City implement a Cross-Connection Control and Backflow Prevention program?

A. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) REQUIRES all public water systems to maintain a cross-connection control program that protects the distribution system delivering drinking water to your home or business. The City is dedicated to ensuring that Fair Oaks Ranch Utility (FORU) public water supply is protected!

Q2. What is a cross-connection?

A. According to the TCEQ, a cross-connection is “a physical connection between drinkable water and a liquid or gas that could make the water unsafe to drink.” Wherever there is a cross connection, there is a potential threat to public health from contaminants. Examples of some common cross-connections are fire sprinkler systems, lawn irrigation systems, and carbonated fountain drink machines.

Q3. What is backflow?

A. Backflow is water flowing in the opposite of its intended direction, either from a loss of pressure in the supply lines or an increase in pressure on the customer’s side.

Q4. How does backflow occur?

A. Backflow is usually caused by back-pressure or back-siphonage. Back-pressure is when the water pressure within a customer’s plumbing system exceeds the pressure of the water distribution system supplying the water. Back-siphonage is caused by negative pressure from a vacuum (or partial vacuum) in the supply piping, just as drinking through a straw draws liquid from a glass. Backflow prevention assemblies are designed to protect the public water system from these types of concerns.

Q5. What is a backflow prevention assembly?

A. Any assembly used to prevent backflow into a public water system. The type of assembly used is based on the existing or potential degree of hazard and backflow condition.

Q6. What is a health hazard?

A. A health hazard is an actual or potential threat of contamination to the public water system that would present a threat to the health of the consumer.

Q7. What are common examples of health hazards in the City of Fair Oaks Ranch?

A. Common examples include irrigation systems with chemical additives, irrigation systems located on properties with a septic tank, fire sprinkler systems, and reclaimed water systems.

Q8. What is a non-health hazard?

A. A non-health hazard is an actual or potential threat of pollution to the public water system by an aesthetically objectionable but non-toxic substance.

Q9. What are common examples of non-health hazards in the City of Fair Oaks Ranch?

A. The most common example in Fair Oaks Ranch are residential irrigation systems without chemical additives that are located on properties without a septic tank/OSSF (FORU wastewater customer).

Q10. Why are backflow prevention assemblies tested?

A. Backflow prevention assemblies have internal seals, springs, and moving parts that wear out. Regular testing ensures assemblies are functioning properly and have not been bypassed.

Q11. What type of backflow prevention assembly is required for my property?

A. The type of assembly depends on what hazard it is being installed to protect against. The most common assemblies being installed in Fair Oaks Ranch are the double check assembly (DC)* and the reduced pressure zone assembly (RPZ)**.

*The DC is the minimum requirement for residential irrigation systems located on properties without a septic tank/on-site sewage facility (connected to FORU wastewater system).

**The RPZ is the minimum requirement for residential irrigation systems located on properties with a septic tank/OSSF. Please note that if an existing double check assembly is present in this situation, the assembly is acceptable as long as it passes testing. If the assembly fails and is beyond repair, the replacement assembly must be upgraded to an RPZ at that time.

Q12. Do I need a backflow prevention assembly if I do NOT have an irrigation system?

A. The most common type of cross-connection within the City is one created by an irrigation system. If you do not have an irrigation system on your property, it is safe to say that an assembly is not needed due to a cross-connection not being present. If you are aware of another cross-connection that exists on your property, please contact the City's Environmental Compliance Manager at (210) 698-0900 to discuss.

Q13. How often must a backflow prevention assembly be tested?

A. Testing frequency depends on the hazard the assembly protects against. Backflow prevention assemblies installed to protect against any health hazard must be tested annually (per state code) by a registered backflow prevention assembly tester ("BPAT"), while assemblies installed to protect against non-health hazards must be tested every three (3) years.

Assemblies installed on an irrigation system that is located on a property with a septic tank/OSSF is required to be tested annually. Assemblies installed on an irrigation system that is located on a property without a septic tank/OSSF (using FORU wastewater services) is required to be tested every three (3) years.

Q14. How can I find a certified backflow prevention assembly tester?

A. Please [click here](#) to view a current list of certified testers.

Q15. I have a lawn irrigation system that was installed before backflow prevention assemblies were mandatory. Do I need an assembly installed or am I "grandfathered" in?

A. All hazards must be isolated from the public water supply regardless of when the hazard was first created or the site constructed. There are no "grandfather" clauses that apply to cross-connection control.

Q16. I do not know the location of my backflow prevention assembly. What do I do now?

A. Please contact the City's Environmental Compliance Manager at (210) 698-0900.

Q17. I received a letter about having my backflow prevention assembly tested. What do I do now?

A. Since the backflow prevention assembly is a fixture of your private plumbing system, you as the property owner are responsible for the periodic testing and/or repairs of the assembly. You will need to hire a certified BPAT to perform the test. The tester will then submit the test and maintenance report to the City's online backflow management system (provided by Vepo, LLC) within ten (10) business days. If you are a renter and you are not responsible for the maintenance plumbing of that property then you will need to forward the letter to your landlord.

Q18. I have multiple backflow prevention assemblies on my property, do I need to have each tested?

A. Yes, each assembly must be tested separately by a certified BPAT.

Q19. What if my backflow prevention assembly fails the test?

A. If an assembly fails the test, the property owner must have it repaired or replaced and retested by a certified tester. If the assembly cannot be repaired and a replacement is necessary, a permit from the City's Building Department is required.

Q20. Can a property owner install their own backflow prevention assembly?

A. Yes. A property owner may choose to install their own assembly as long as the following is completed:

1. A permit is successfully obtained from the City's Building Department; and
2. Upon installation, the assembly must be tested by a certified tester (see Q14) with a passing result submitted to the City's online backflow management system - www.vepollc.com. Please note that it is the responsibility of the tester to submit results within ten (10) business days of the test date.

Q21. What happens if I do not have my assembly tested?

A. If a FORU customer decides not to have their "in use" backflow prevention assembly tested, enforcement procedures include the discontinuation of water services until compliance is met and/or a possible fine.