

THE HAZARDS OF CROSS CONNECTIONS AND BACKFLOW

Cross connections? Backflow? What are cross connections and backflow?

Cross connections are defined as the physical link connecting a source of pollution or contamination with a potable (drinking) water supply. Backflow is defined as the unwanted reversal of flow into the public water system.

Let's look at an example of a cross connection that resulted in a backflow incident:

In October 1969, most of the members and coaches of a college varsity football team became ill with infectious hepatitis. The water supply on a practice field was found to be the cause. A drinking fountain and the irrigation system for the field were on the same line. A heavy fire demand from hydrants in the area had created a negative pressure in the waterlines and caused contaminated surface water around the sprinklers to be siphoned into the potable water lines. Players and coaches drinking from the fountain became ill and the school was forced to cancel the remainder of the football schedule.

This is an example of one of many backflow incidents that have occurred. Even though backflow is not common, the potential does exist. All inground lawn irrigation systems in Carthage are required to have a Reduced Pressure type Backflow Device installed and tested annually by a certified tester. Once CW&EP has a record of the device, annual testing from the date of the previous test, or when the device is installed/ reinstalled is required.

Carthage Water and Electric has a Cross Connection Control Program which contains information on policy, type of backflow protection required, where backflow protection is required, inspection and maintenance, and the current list of approved backflow prevention assemblies.

Cross connections can be a serious threat to the safety and health of a community. The public and private sectors can help by adding backflow prevention to unprotected cross connections (examples: lawn irrigation systems, boilers, etc.). Your cooperation can help assure that the Carthage drinking water supply will always remain safe and free of any potential contamination.

If you have any questions concerning cross connections and backflow prevention, please contact Carthage Water & Electric at 237-7300 extension 550.