



GWINNETT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES Backflow Prevention

Protecting Water Protecting People



QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASKED ABOUT BACKFLOW PREVENTION

Q: What is backflow-prevention?

A: *The prevention of reverse flow in a water system from the normal or intended direction.*

Q: What can cause something like this to happen?

A: *Backflow and/or backsiphonage can be created in a water system by a drop in supply pressure due to heavy demand or use such as fire fighting, repairs or breaks in the supply pipe, etc.*

Q: So, why is back-flow prevention important to me? What does this have to do with us? It's not our problem if you people can't design the system so we have enough pressure, without the pipes bursting all the time.

A: *If everyone would use the same amount of water all the time this could become more of a reality. However, we all know this is not likely to happen. So it becomes every consumer's responsibility to protect his own system as well as other users of the public water supply system against any potential contamination or pollution which may be generated on or from his premises, which could backflow or be backsiphoned into his and/or the main supply system.*

Q: Why am I responsible for backflow-prevention?

A: *The Federal Government passed the Safe Drinking Water Act in 1974, and Georgia adopted these federal standards the same year. In 1977, Georgia passed the Rules for Safe Drinking Water which states:*

"A supplier of water or any person having control of facilities which may cause the contamination of public water system has the responsibility to prevent water from unapproved sources or any contaminants from entering the public water system."

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources; Environmental Protection Division, in 1983 amended this rule and mandated that all public water systems develop Cross Connection Control and/or Backflow Prevention Programs.



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Q: Is there a county ordinance that covers this?

A: Yes, to augment and further reinforce the Georgia State/Gwinnett County Plumbing Code, the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners in 1983 (the same year the state made these programs mandatory) passed Sec. 5-1012 of the Code of Ordinance, and in 1986 amended and renumbered it to SE. 5-1015, which reads in part as follows;

“The county water system is further authorized to install or require to be installed suitable backflow-prevention devices at the customer’s service-connections) or other areas as needed to prevent contamination or the risk thereof for the public water system.”

Q: Is there not a Grandfather Clause in regard to the retrofit requirement?

A: No, a contaminant and/or pollutant which might enter a system would be just as much a health hazard and create the same amount of damage regardless of the system’s age. Older systems could in fact be a greater liability risk due to leakage, unauthorized changes, make-shift connections and etc.