

21 Backflow Prevention “Frequently Asked Questions”

1. Is this a scam?
 - No, this is not a scam. The backflow requirement is mandated by ADEM, EPA and the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974.
2. Why haven't I heard about this program?
 - Central Alabama Water (CAW) has been sending out information to customers who are already identified in the system but realize that everyone needs to become aware. A more aggressive approach to educating ALL customers about Backflow has been developed and is in the process of implementation to notify and educate ALL customers.
3. What Agencies mandate or require and why?
 - ADEM, EPA and the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974
4. When did CAW start their Backflow Program?
 - CAW's Backflow Program was established in 1992.
5. What is a backflow assembly?
 - A backflow assembly is a device that prevents water from flowing in the opposite (reverse) direction and contaminates the drinking water system.
6. Why do I need a back flow at my residence?
 - If you have an irrigation/sprinkler system, pool (below or above) and/or auxiliary water source (well or water capturing system) at your residence, then you are required to meet the backflow requirement.
7. Why now CAW make everyone get this backflow?
 - It has been a requirement since 1992, which is when the CAW's Backflow Program was established. CAW obtained the necessary means (additional personnel and a new operation system) that allows the Backflow Department to facilitate residential and commercial inspections and audits more effectively and efficiently. And the new operating system makes it easier for the information to be mailed to the residential and commercial customers.
8. Everyone in the neighborhood/subdivision needs to get this assembly.
 - Only premises that have a pool, irrigation, or auxiliary water source (well or water capturing system) on their property.

9. I don't use my irrigation/sprinkler system that much or at all, so why do I need a backflow assembly?
- Although you don't use your irrigation system much or at all, you are still required to meet backflow compliance because that system is an actual hazard due to it is connected to the water service. CAW can't determine when or if you plan to use your irrigation system. To ensure that the water is protected, the customers need to meet the requirements.
10. I don't use my pool, so do I still need to install the backflow?
- Yes, you are still required to meet backflow compliance because a pool is considered a "POTENTIAL" hazard; most pools are filled by using a water hose. Most homeowners placed the hose in the pool when filling up the pool. These situations create potential backflow siphonage that causes water to reverse in the Water Works system. CAW can't predict when the water main will break or if a customer is going to put the water hose in the pool. Considering these are potential hazards, the best practice or safest practice is for the customer to meet the requirement to protect the water.
11. If I don't use or plan on using my irrigation anymore, what can I do to remove the requirement?
- The customer can cut and cap the irrigation system. Prior to doing so, please contact CAW's Backflow Department for more details at (205) 244-4251.
12. My pool is not connected to the water, so why do I need a back flow?
- A pool is considered a "POTENTIAL" hazard, above or below and connected or not connected. Most homeowners placed the water hose in the pool when filling up the pool. This situation creates a potential cross connection issue. CAW cannot assume what a customer will or want to do. So, the best practice and safest practice is for the customer to meet the requirement to ensure the water is protected.
13. Can I be grandfathered since I have been living in this house for so many years already?
- No, there is no such thing as grandfather rule when it comes to protecting the water system.
14. How much does a Double Check Valve Assembly Cost?
- 007 Double Check Assembly (DCVA) is ranging around \$110-0 - \$2500 estimated cost is derived from receiving general feedback from residential homeowners. I recommend you contact at minimum of 3 Backflow Technicians and request a "FREE" estimate to ensure you secure the best cost to complete the work. The cost may vary due to the required work that is needed to install the backflow.

15. How much does a Reduced Pressure Zone Assembly cost?
- 009 Reduced Pressure Zone Assembly (RPZA) is ranging around \$2000-\$3500. This cost was derived from receiving general feedback from residential homeowners. I recommend you contact at minimum 3 Backflow Technicians and request a “FREE” estimate to ensure you secure the best cost to complete the work. The cost varies due to the required work that is needed to install the backflow.
16. Where can I purchase the assembly myself?
- Customers can purchase a backflow assembly from Grainger or Ferguson located in Birmingham, AL.
17. Where do I install this device?
- This device should be installed directly behind the meter. If there is a reason why this can't be achieved, please contact CAW's Backflow Department for more details on (205) 244-4251.
18. Can I install this back flow in the house or garage?
- Only if there is a conflict outside that prohibits the customer from installing the backflow according to the requirement. If there is any conflict, then a CAW Backflow Inspector will need to come out to inspect the premises to confirm the conflict and identify the best place to install the backflow assembly.
19. Can I put a hose bibb vacuum breaker on my outside water faucet to fill the pool and meet the requirement?
- No, the hose bibb vacuum breaker that is used on the outside faucet does not provide full containment on the customer resident. And CAW does not recognize this device as an approved backflow prevention assembly.
20. What happens if I don't install a back flow?
- According to CAW's Policy, the customer water service could be discontinued if the customer refuses to meet the requirement.
21. What causes backflow?
- Backflow can happen if someone hits a fire hydrant, or if a fire hydrant is being flushed or if there is a main break in the area near your home. When backflow happens, the water will be lower in the water system than what's at your premise/property, which can cause back-siphonage. This will reverse the water flow, which will make the water flow from your home back through the meter into the potable water system. This will contaminate the treated water in the water system.