

CAW Backflow Testing Frequently Asked Questions

Why did I receive a letter about my backflow preventer?

TESTING OF BACKFLOW PREVENTION ASSEMBLY ANNUAL RECERTIFICATION

You need to arrange for testing of your backflow preventer with a company from the Central Alabama Water (CAW) tester's list. The tester will send your test results to the Cross-Connection Control Department. Testing must be completed within 30 days of the date on the letter.

Final Notice for the Testing of your Backflow Prevention Assembly

Once you receive the final notice you have ten days from the date on the letter to notify Cross-Connection Control Department whether your backflow preventer testing has been completed. If your backflow preventer is still out of compliance after ten days, CAW has the authority to terminate service.

What is a backflow preventer?

Backflow preventers are special devices used to prevent an undesired reverse flow of water containing contaminants such as bacteria, pollutants or chemicals from entering a clean or potable water supply. Backflow preventer devices are fitted in the water pipeline to stop the reverse flow of water in a pipeline to the potable water source.

A backflow preventer is mechanical and has many moving parts. There are various internal seals, springs, and other parts that have the potential to fail. Parts may fail unexpectedly because of excessive wear, fouling, and even general fatigue.

Who is responsible for this test?

The homeowner is responsible for having the assembly tested.

Who can test my backflow preventer?

The homeowner will receive a letter indicating that a backflow assembly is due for testing, a current list of approved testers, and a blank test and maintenance form. The homeowner must contact a certified tester from the supplied list to test these devices. The tester will complete the test and maintenance form and return it to CAW's Cross-Connection Control Department to enter into the system.

What are the reasons for Testing?

THIS IS NOT AN ALL-INCLUSIVE LIST AND YOU MAY BE REQUIRED TO TEST YOUR BACKFLOW PREVENTER FOR REASONS OTHER THAN WHAT IS LISTED BELOW

1. Annual Required Testing – Birmingham Water Works Board requires that all commercial and residential properties with backflow preventers be tested annually. This is to ensure the assemblies are in good working order and will protect the water from contamination.
2. New Installation – Birmingham Water Works Board requires that all new commercial and residential properties with backflow preventers be tested within 30 days of installation and annually thereafter.
3. Device Failure - A backflow preventer is mechanical and has many moving parts. There are various internal seals, springs, and other parts that have the potential to fail. Parts may fail unexpectedly because of excessive wear, fouling, and even general fatigue. This is called “Device Failure” and must be repaired. Once the backflow preventer has been repaired it must be tested immediately. If your device fails to pass inspection, you are responsible for repairing or replacing the device within 30 days. If you are still out of compliance after 30 days, all water services to the property will be discontinued until you are compliant.

How often is a backflow preventer tested?

CAW requires every customer who owns a backflow device is required to test the device annually. The safety of people in a home is the main reason to have annual testing of backflow preventer. The failure to have regular testing of a backflow prevention device may result in water service being discontinued for a home.

How much does the backflow test cost?

Prices vary depending on who you call. We recommend getting multiple quotes from the approved backflow certified tester list. Contact CAW's Cross-Connection Control Department for a current Backflow Tester's list.

Can I remove my backflow prevention assembly?

No. If a backflow prevention assembly is required for your property you cannot remove the assembly without approval from CAW. If you wish to remove the backflow preventer you must contact CAW's Cross-Connection Control Department and set up a meeting with an inspector who will determine if a backflow assembly is still required for your property.

Backflow gone wrong: (cases/stories)

www.backflowcases.com

www.wrcmanagement.com/Case_Studies.html

www.treeo.ufl.edu/backflow/epa-resources/backflow-case-histories