Backflow & Cross-Connection Glossary

Cross-Connection

Any physical link between a potable (drinking) water supply and a non-potable or potentially contaminated source. This connection creates a risk that contaminants could enter the clean water system.

Backflow

The unwanted reversal of water flow in a plumbing system, causing contaminated water to flow back into the clean water supply.

Backflow Prevention Assembly (BPA)

A mechanical device installed in a water system to prevent backflow. It ensures that water flows in only one direction and protects drinking water from contamination.

Air Gap

A physical separation (vertical space) between a water outlet and a potentially contaminated source (like a drain). It is the simplest and most reliable method of preventing backflow.

Reduced Pressure Principle (RP or RPZ)

A type of backflow prevention assembly that uses two check valves and a pressure-monitored zone between them. It provides a high level of protection and is used in high-risk situations.

Double Check Valve (DC or DCVA)

A backflow prevention device with two internal check valves. It provides protection against backflow but is typically used in lower-risk situations than reduced pressure assemblies.

Certified Tester

A trained and officially approved individual who inspects, tests, and certifies backflow prevention assemblies to ensure they are functioning properly.

Cross-Connection Control Specialist

A professional responsible for identifying, managing, and preventing cross-connections in water systems. They oversee compliance, inspections, and backflow prevention programs.

Backflow Prevention Device

A general term for any device or method used to prevent backflow and protect the potable water supply from contamination. This includes assemblies like reduced pressure principle devices, double check valves, and methods such as air gaps.