

## Backflow and your business

Keeping drinking water safe and reliable for everyone



## What is Backflow and how does it happen?



Backflow refers to when water from a property flows back into the water network managed by South East Water.

Backflow from an industrial or commercial property that uses chemicals or foreign substances could contaminate South East Water's network. If this contaminated water is delivered to customers, this can result in serious health impacts for the public.

Our role is to provide drinking water that meets Victoria's strict health standards, and the strict prevention of Backflow is key to us supplying safe drinking water to our customers.

#### **Backflow can occur due to:**

#### Back-siphonage

This is where a sudden drop in water pressure, such as a burst water main, can cause water to be siphoned back from a property and into the water supply.

#### **Back-pressure**

This is where a pressure pump on the property is connected to the property's drinking water system, and pumps water at a higher pressure than the water mains. This can force the water from the property, along with any contaminants, back into the water supply network.

The installation of a backflow prevention containment device at the main water meter assembly protects the water network.

### Why backflow prevention is important

At South East Water we operate and maintain both drinking water and recycled water networks which must be protected from backflow hazards with appropriate backflow prevention devices.

**Note:** Recycled water can be identified by the purple pipework and meter assembly, however this isn't available to all properties.

If a property's drinking water supply is accidentally connected to a source of contamination, either through a cross-connection or simply a hose submerged in a container of chemicals, then these foreign substances could enter the water supply network.

Contaminated drinking water endangers people's health and can impact our community's confidence in the safety and quality of drinking and recycled water.

The installation of a backflow prevention containment device, relative to the level of backflow hazard on the property, allows water to enter the property through the water meter but prevents water from flowing back into the water supply network.

Most industrial and commercial properties will require a backflow prevention containment device installed at the main water meter, on both drinking water supplies and fire services (where installed).



# Typical backflow hazards which can be found in a business

- Chemical dispensers
- Petrol and oil interceptors
- Storage of chemicals
- Grease interceptors
- Irrigation systems
- Degreasing facilities
- Clean in place systems
- Food production systems
- Alternate water supplies and/or reclaimed water systems

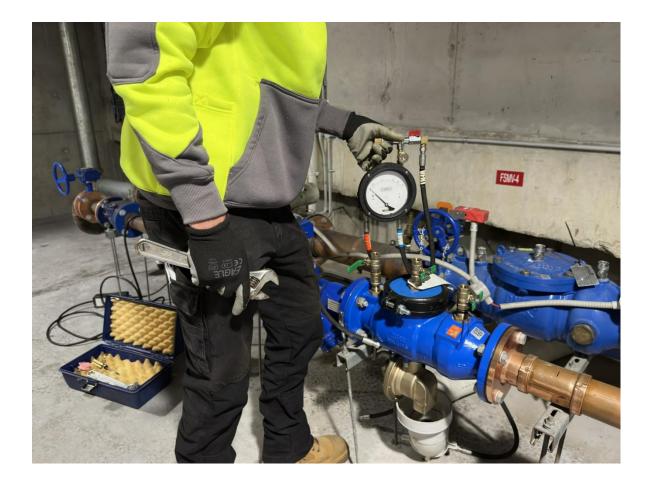
Some buildings also require a higher level of backflow protection due to the nature of the building (e.g. factories, warehouses, sites with restricted access). The National Construction Code Vol. 3 2022 lists containment backflow requirements by building class, and information on backflow hazard ratings.

## Your responsibilities as a property owner

The responsibilities relating to the installation, maintenance and testing of backflow devices are detailed in the Water (Estimation, Supply & Sewerage) Regulations 2014. As a property owner, it is your responsibility to:

- arrange a licenced plumber qualified in backflow prevention to install, commission, and test a backflow prevention containment device appropriate to the level of backflow hazard on the property.
- have your backflow device tested annually, and the backflow test report submitted to South East Water backflow prevention team (backflow@sew.com.au).
- Ensure the backflow device is maintained and promptly repaired within 20 business days should it fail an annual backflow test.

**NOTE**: If the business type or activity on the property changes, a plumber licenced in backflow prevention must assess the property for any new potential backflow hazard. This may result in needing to install a new (higher) hazard backflow prevention containment device.



### How we manage backflow protection

At South East Water, we have a dedicated backflow management system which records all installed testable backflow prevention containment devices for drinking water supplies, fire services, and recycled water supplies.

We will remind you when it's time to get your backflow device tested each year.



If you don't comply with our backflow requirements of notices

We may:

- restrict your water supply
- disconnect your water supply
- carry out the backflow device testing and any remediation works to ensure the containment backflow prevention device(s) are compliant, and recoup from you any costs we incur to ensure our water supply is protected.

South East Water's <u>Backflow Policy</u> provides further guidance, and can be found on our website at <u>Backflow prevention | South East Water</u>. Alternatively, please email us at <u>backflow@sew.com.au</u>