Backflow and my home

Keeping drinking water safe and reliable for everyone

South East Water

Greater Western Water

Yarra Valley Water

South East Water, Yarra Valley Water and Greater Western Water are committed to providing safe drinking water that meets Victoria's strict health standards. The strict prevention of backflow is key to us supplying safe drinking water to our customers.

Providing safe drinking water

What is Backflow and how does it happen?

Backflow refers to when the water from a customer's property flows back into the water network.

Most homes are classed as a low backflow hazard, however some homes can be rated as a higher hazard, due to the installation of various fixtures or equipment within the home or on the property. The types of appliances or fixtures that can cause a higher rating are covered further down in the document.

Backflow from residential properties could contaminate the water network. If this contaminated water is delivered to other customers, it can result in serious health impacts for the public. This is why we install backflow prevention containment devices at the main water meter to protect the water network.

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 (e.g. for a rain water system) is connected to the property's drinking water system, and pumps at a higher pressure than the water main. This can force the water from the property, along with any contaminants, back into the water supply network.

Why backflow prevention is important

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, for example a hose submerged in a container of chemicals or a hand held device submerged in a toilet, 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 homes will only require a **low hazard non-testable backflow prevention containment** device (known as a dual check valve) installed at the main water meter. However, **some homes** do require a **higher level of backflow protection**, by installing a **testable backflow prevention containment device**. These devices are solely mechanical and do not require connection to power.

Identifying your containment backflow device at your home.

High Hazard Backflow Prevention Device	**Low Hazard** Backflow Prevention Device
	

Homes with a higher hazard rating

The National Construction Code Vol. 3 provides information on backflow hazard ratings.

The relevant water corporation's Backflow Prevention Policy will also identify containment hazard ratings above the National Construction Code Vol. 3 minimum requirements.

In some instances, you may have a new fixture, appliance or device installed by a licenced plumber which then requires uplifting the level of containment backflow prevention to a higher hazard as stated below.

If you identify that your home has one of the fixtures, appliances or devices below installed, but you identify the backflow device is not adequate, please reach out.

- Below ground rainwater tanks (High)
- Bidets or bidet toilet seats (High)
- Toilet hand/douche sprays (High)
- Swimming pools with automatic pool top ups (Medium)
- Some home activities, to be assessed as per National Construction Code Vol. 3
- Alternate water supplies and/or reclaimed water systems such as grey water reuse. (High)

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Example of a Toilet hand / douche sprays device installation.

Your responsibilities as a property owner

As a property owner, it's your responsibility under the AS/NZS 2845.3 Water supply – Backflow prevention devices Part 3 : Field testing and maintenance of testable devices an AS/NZS 3500.1 Plumbing and Drainage Part 1. Water Service National Construction Code volume 3 and Water (General) Amendment Regulations 2025 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.
- If you have a testable backflow prevention device ensure you have your backflow device tested annually, and the backflow test report submitted to the relevant backflow prevention team.
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Water Corporation	Phone Number	Email address.
South East Water	1300 249 140	backflow@sew.com.au
Yarra Valley Water	1300 443 048	backflow@yvw.com.au
Greater Western Water	9313 8375	backflow@gww.com.au

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- Ensure the backflow prevention containment device is maintained and promptly repaired within 20 business days should it fail an annual backflow test.

How we manage backflow protection

South East Water, Yarra Valley Water and Greater Western Water each have dedicated backflow management systems which record all installed testable backflow prevention containment devices for drinking water and recycled water supplies.

The reason we manage backflow prevention containment devices is to comply with the Water Act 1989 and to ensure the safety of drinking water for all customers.

We will remind you when it's time to get your backflow prevention containment device tested each year if your device is registered with us and needs testing.

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If you don’t comply with our backflow requirements or 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 recover from you any costs we incur to ensure our water supply is protected.

This guideline was developed in June 2025 by South East Water’s Compliance & Inspection Team, with contributions from The Water Quality Protection Team leader, Compliance and Inspections Manager and supported by Greater Western Water and Yarra Valley Water.