



# Fact Sheet



## Backflow Prevention Explained!

Every time you fill a glass with water from the tap. Prepare a meal, or take a shower or bath, you rely on the quality of the water and that it is clean, pure and safe.

Occasionally things happen that can affect the quality of your drinking water. One of the most common incidences is a burst water main. This creates a temporary loss of pressure within the water pipe or water main.

When this happens, conditions are present that can allow the **BACKFLOW** of contaminants into the water system and threaten the safety of our drinking water.



### What is Backflow?

It is the undesirable reversal of flow of fluids, chemicals, or any other foreign matter into the public drinking water system.

There are two forms of backflow. 1. Backsiphonage (usually caused by the loss of pressure in the drinking water system i.e. a broken watermain) & 2. Backpressure (caused by pumps, elevated piping systems or thermal expansion)

Depending on what contaminant is mixed with the drinking water, you could be drinking water laced with poison resulting in sickness or even death.

The Backflow Prevention Association of Australia Inc.

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## Can Backflow be prevented?

YES. The backflow of undesirable contaminants into the drinking water can be prevented. A **cross connection** is a physical connection between the water supply and any source of possible contamination. By eliminating or controlling all actual or potential cross connections, the drinking water system can be protected.

## What type of protection is available?

There are 3 levels of protection against backflow. 1. **Containment**. This is when a backflow prevention device is installed at the boundary of a property. Usually at the water meter. This protects the water in the supply main from harmful cross connections within the property. 2. **Zone Protection**. The drinking water feeding a potentially harmful zone within a facility like a morgue at a hospital. 3. **Individual Protection**. When a piece of equipment like a chemical plating vat has water top up, a backflow preventer installed at the connection to the piece of equipment will ensure the safety of the drinking water.

## What can you do?

First, you should determine if there are potential cross connections in your home or business. A local plumber experienced in backflow can assist with this.

If a cross connection is identified, the correct procedure is to reinstate the piping system so that it is corrected. If this is not viable, the installation of a device suitable to the degree of hazard can help.

The Plumbing Code of Australia identifies where backflow prevention devices can be used and local councils have a management programme for the upkeep and maintenance of the devices so that they are kept safe.

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