Backflow FAQ's

What is a backflow and why are they required?

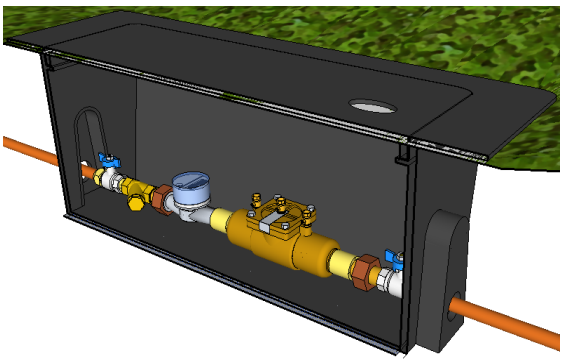
A backflow preventer is a mechanical device containing two check valves that stops the drinking water supply from becoming contaminated by water or other substances that are not suitable for drinking.

When water mains pressure drops, contaminated water can be drawn back into the drinking water supply. A common example is when a running hose submerged in a pool or chemical tank siphons back into the water pipes due to vacuum caused during a water mains break.

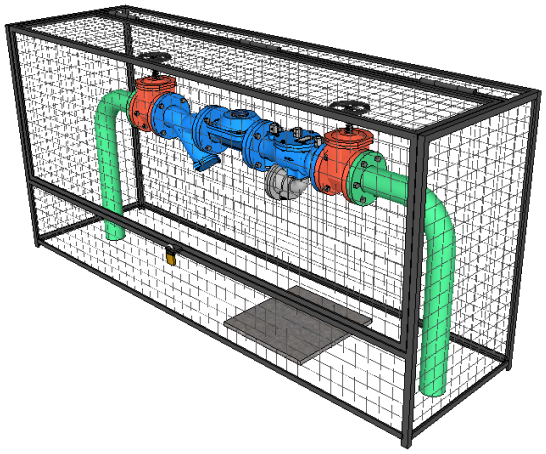
Who needs a backflow?

Every Council water connection requires a form of backflow prevention as per the Council Water Supply Bylaw and the Health Act. There are three classes of hazard as listed below. A further list of hazards under each class can be found in the Whangarei District Council Backflow Prevention Policy Code of Practice

- Low Hazard: All new domestic connections with no associated water supply hazards require a "non-testable dual check valve" within the meter box, these are considered as low risk connections.
- Medium Hazard: Commercial and residential connections with pools, stock troughs, tanks or other hazards will require an in-ground "testable double check valve".
- High Hazard: commercial connections require an above ground testable "reduced pressure zone device".



Medium hazard = Testable double check valve



High Hazard = Reduced pressure zone device

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Installing the device

Testable devices (medium and high hazard) are required to be installed when hazards are identified (such as during Council swimming pool or building warrant of fitness inspections).

The type of device required is dependent on the risk. Council requires these to be installed by a Water Services Approved Contractor. Customers must engage the installation Contractor from the below list:

Licensed Boundary Backflow Prevention Device Installers			
Company	**Contact**	**Phone**	**Address**
Downer Water	Shirley Harris	09 470 1796	PO Box 909 Whangarei 0140
The Watertight Co.	Gordon McKay	09 438 2629	PO Box 523 Whangarei 0140
Watco Plumbing	Royce Gray	09 438 4006	PO Box 10045 Te Mai Whangarei 0143

An accompanying Public Utility Application must be submitted prior to the device being installed. If only a backflow is required there will be no charge for the application. However, the applicant pays for the backflow device, installation costs and first test. Once installed and tested the device becomes vested to Council, like the water meter.

Where are backflow devices installed?

Backflow devices are designed to protect the public water supply and are generally installed at the boundary in a meter box or above ground in a cage directly after the meter. Additional devices are sometimes required inside the premises under requirements of the Building Act.

Backflow FAQ's

Responsibilities and Costs

The customer pays for the device installation.

Testing of backflow preventers is done annually

Annual test charges are included within water rate invoices and charged in accordance with Councils Annual Plan. The on-going test charge, covers all device repairs and maintenance.

In instances where device testing and maintenance is privately arranged by the customer (using a Council approved backflow IQP), please let the Water Services Department know and we will change your water account details accordingly.

What if my backflow is no longer required?

Generally, if the water connection is still required but the hazard is removed the device remains in place but testing and test charges are cancelled. In circumstances, "such as a pool being removed" it is the customers' responsibility to inform Water Services of the change.

If you have been requested to install a backflow prevention device, Council thank you in advance for your cooperation to help ensure the safety of Council water supply.

If you have any queries on this matter feel free to contact the Water Services Team during regular business hours: phone (09) 430 4200 or 0800 COUNCIL INFO (0800 932 463)

NZ backflow prevention references

Council Backflow Prevention Policy and Code of Practice

New Zealand Building Code Clause G12 Water Supplies

Public Utility Application