BACKFLOW TESTERS — GUIDE

Backflow testing frequency by state

Selected official rules for Washington, California and Texas, plus a Canadian utility example.

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An annual reminder is useful only after you know which rule covers the assembly. State rules can set a minimum. A utility may set its own reporting date or apply a stricter schedule. This guide compares selected sources. It is not a complete table for every state.

Washington

WAC 246-290-490(7)(b) requires inspections or tests of covered air gaps and assemblies when specified events occur and annually thereafter. Events include assembly installation, repair, reinstallation, relocation and a backflow incident. The rule permits the purveyor to require more frequent testing for high-hazard premises or assemblies that repeatedly fail. See the dated Washington source below.

California

The April 2026 Cross-Connection Control Policy Handbook, section 3.3.3, says backflow prevention assemblies must be field tested at least annually. It allows more frequent testing for high-hazard premises or assemblies at increased risk of failure. The handbook also addresses tests associated with installation and work on an assembly. Ask the public water system which assemblies and deadlines it has assigned to your account.

Texas

TCEQ's consumer guidance says a licensed tester must check an assembly when it is installed on an irrigation system. It says the water provider may have additional rules requiring an annual irrigation test. The same guidance describes annual testing for high-grade assemblies at listed hazard premises. The testing schedule for a Texas residential device depends on its use, hazard classification and the local water provider’s rules. Ask your provider about the hazard classification and local program.

Canada: a utility example

Toronto's program page says covered devices must be tested at initial installation, within 72 hours after cleaning, repair, replacement, service or overhaul, and at least once a year. It also gives tester registration criteria. This is a Toronto example. It is not a rule for every Canadian province or municipality.

Build a reliable record

Keep the notice, assembly inventory and accepted report in the same property file. Record the

next date supplied by the utility. Name the staff member who will book the visit and the person who will confirm report acceptance. If the property changes use or an assembly is repaired, contact the utility instead of waiting for the next reminder.

For a state not covered here, use the state drinking water agency and the supplying utility as your starting sources. Ask for the current written program, the test interval and the report deadline.

Sources

All sources below were fetched on 2026-11-10. Dates beside titles identify publication, revision or access dates. This guide is information for planning. Confirm the current requirements with your water utility.

- Washington Legislature, WAC 246-290-490, effective 2022-01-01.
- California State Water Resources Control Board, Cross-Connection Control Policy Handbook, April 2026.
- TCEQ, Cross-Connection Control and Backflow Prevention, accessed 2026-11-10.
- City of Toronto, Backflow Prevention Program, modified 2025-09-24.

Frequently asked questions

Is there one annual rule for the US?

These sources describe different state and utility programs. Check the rule and notice for your property.

Can a repair trigger another test?

Yes. The cited Washington and Toronto programs describe tests following repair. Confirm the timing with your utility.