BACKFLOW TESTERS — GUIDE

Irrigation and fire line backflow rules

Check system use, hazards and local acceptance before booking testing or repairs.

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An irrigation assembly and a fire line assembly can have different hazards, access needs and tester qualifications. Send the utility notice and the equipment inventory before asking for a quote. Do not assume the same service scope covers every assembly at the property.

Irrigation: ask what is connected

TCEQ's cross-connection page says irrigation assemblies must be tested by a licensed tester when installed. It explains that the water provider may have additional rules requiring annual testing. Use the provider's current written program to settle the recurring schedule for a Texas property.

Tell the tester whether the system has chemical addition, another water source or a pump. Washington's WAC 246-290-490 lists irrigation systems with chemical addition among high-health-hazard premises. The assessed hazard affects the protection selected. A device that was suitable before a change may need review after a change.

Do not choose a PVB or SVB based only on price or height. California's handbook defines these as backsiphonage protection, not backpressure protection. Ask the utility or qualified designer to confirm the approved arrangement for your system.

Fire lines: identify the system before the visit

Washington's rule distinguishes residential flow-through or combination fire systems made with potable piping and materials from other fire systems. For the other systems, it describes RPBA or RPDA protection where chemicals or an unapproved auxiliary supply are used, and DCVA or DCDA protection for the other fire systems described in that provision. Read the full rule and have the authority assess the actual installation. This summary is not a design instruction.

A detector arrangement may have a bypass and meter. Record the complete equipment identity. Tell the tester about locked rooms, monitored valves and facility contacts. Ask which parts of the system the test appointment covers.

Check the scope of the tester's authority

TCEQ says Texas BPAT licence holders may test and repair fire line assemblies only if permanently employed by an Approved Fireline Contractor. A domestic or irrigation service offer alone does not establish that condition. Ask the company to identify the contractor and named individual for the work.

For a Canadian property, use the local utility's criteria. Toronto lists different documentation for plumbing contractors, sprinkler companies and engineering professionals. Its page also sets registration steps. Do not extend those Toronto criteria to all of Canada.

Plan the visit and close the record

Coordinate any proposed interruption with the facility's responsible fire protection contact. Ask that person and the contractor what notifications and arrangements are needed. Do not close a fire supply valve yourself to prepare for a test.

After testing, compare the report with the assembly inventory. Ask who submits each result, what repairs need approval and how the utility confirms acceptance. Keep the fire system records and water utility records linked so a future manager can find both.

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.

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

Frequently asked questions

Does Texas require the same annual irrigation test everywhere?

TCEQ states an installation test is required and that a provider may have additional annual-test rules. Ask the supplying utility.

Can any tester service a Texas fire line?

TCEQ describes a permanent-employment condition with an Approved Fireline Contractor for BPAT licence holders doing that work.