



Australia implements a safe and reliable water sanitation system which allows us to have access to safe water for drinking, cooking and cleaning. This is partly attributed to government regulations to prevent water backflow.

Water authorities have a responsibility to provide safe drinking water to the community. It is the responsibility of the property owner to ensure they do not affect the mains supply with any water from their property.

Backflow is the undesirable reversal of flow of contaminated water into the potable water supply. To prevent this from happening, a backflow prevention device is installed to stop the undesirable contaminant entering the potable water piping.

Backflow prevention devices are required by Australian Standards, National Plumbing and Drainage Code (AS 3500.1) for the protection and conservation of safe drinking water.

It is important for property owners who have backflow prevention devices to understand the importance of backflow prevention, as well as their responsibilities under the law to maintain these.

**You might need a backflow device if you have any of the following on your property:**

- an irrigation system
- fire hose reels or fire hydrants
- commercial or industrial equipment or activities which could pollute the drinking water supply, such as air conditioning cooling towers or chemical cleaning areas
- water outlets in proximity to pollutants, grease traps or chemicals
- an alternate water supply

The type of backflow prevention device required depends on the hazard rating or the risk of possible contamination. Any property that drinking water enters is designated to be either a high, medium or low hazard area. These ratings are defined in AS3500.1 and are outlined below:

**For further information phone Richmond Valley Council on 6660 0300, email [council@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au) or visit [www.richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au](http://www.richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au)**

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**High risk** - Any condition, device or practice within the water supply system and its operation which has the potential to cause death. For this rating, reduced pressure zone devices (RPZD) are used. *Examples of reduced pressure zone devices (testable)*



**Medium risk** - Any condition, device or practice within the water supply system and its operation which could endanger health. In this instance, double check valves are used. *Example of double check valve (testable)*



**Low risk** - Any condition, device or practice within the water supply, where dual check valves are used. *Example of dual check valve (non-testable)*



These devices are either testable or non-testable types. All dual check valves are non-testable.

Testable backflow devices require annual testing and must be registered with Council. Backflow tags are used to show the device must be maintained and tested every 12 months. Regular inspection and annual testing of backflow prevention devices to confirm that no contaminants are entering the water supply are required by the plumbing code. The owner or tenant is also responsible for paying for testing and maintenance.

Owners/occupiers of buildings with backflow prevention devices must:

- Make sure only approved valves are installed;
- Make sure there is ongoing maintenance, servicing and testing of installations; and
- Use only competent and endorsed water supply plumbers to test and maintain valves. Plumbers must hold an endorsed registration in water supply plumbing and be conversant with the devices to be installed and able to interpret relevant codes and standards for installation.

### **What does backflow maintenance involve?**

Backflow maintenance involves a few steps to make sure everything is working properly. Generally, you can expect an accredited plumber to:

1. **Check.** Your endorsed backflow plumber will check your device for obvious signs of malfunction or degradation.
2. **Test.** Your plumber will test the device to make sure it works properly. They will also complete the details on the test tag.
3. **Submit.** Your plumber will submit the results of the test to the Council within 10 working days.
4. **Maintain.** If the device didn't pass the test, your endorsed and certified backflow plumber will then complete any required maintenance. They will then retest and re-submit the results.