

IT CAN HAPPEN IN TEXAS

While mixing a batch of pesticide, a worker pushed a garden hose into a tank until it touched the bottom. Nearby, city workers were flushing a water main. Where the worker was mixing the pesticide, the water pressure dropped, and the water flow in the hose reversed. Water and pesticides flowed from the pesticide tanks back through the hose and into the water lines of the house.

CROSS CONNECTION: a physical connection between drinkable water and a liquid or gas that can make water unsafe to drink. (Wherever there is a cross connection, there is a potential threat to public health from the liquid or gas contaminants).

BACKFLOW: Water flowing in the opposite of its intended direction, either from a loss of pressure in the supply lines or an increase in pressure on the customer's side of the water meter. (In these situations, if there is a cross connection, contaminants can be drawn into the water lines of the household, and if the backflow continues, even into the public water mains.)

THE GARDEN HOSE IS THE MOST COMMON CROSS CONNECTION. Each of these common uses of a garden hose sets up a cross connection:

Forcing it into a clogged gutter, downspout, or sewer pipe to flush out a clog

Connecting it directly to a hose-end sprayer to apply pesticides or fertilizer to your yard

Connecting it to a soap-and-brush attachment to wash your car, boat or siding

Letting the end of the hose lie in a puddle, swimming pool, or pool of water on the ground

Leaving the hose in a water trough for animals or livestock

You can probably think of other examples. In all of these examples, if backflow does occur, your water lines into your house could become contaminated. Depending on how long the backflow lasts, the contamination could spread into the water supply.

THERE ARE TWO INEXPENSIVE WAYS TO SOLVE A BACKFLOW PROBLEM:

Make sure that the end of your water hose is never submerged or connected to a non-potable substance

Install a **hose bib vacuum breaker** on each of your outside faucets (can be found at home supply stores, hardware stores or plumbing suppliers).

IRRIGATION SYSTEMS AND BACKFLOW: As a homeowner, you may install and maintain your own irrigation system, but it's still important to have a suitable backflow assembly (BPA) in place and to be sure that it works properly.. TCEQ requires you to have a licensed BPA tester check the BPA when it is installed on your irrigation system and provide the water system with a copy of the report. TCEQ also requires an annual inspection and a copy of the inspection report is to be sent to the water company each year. If you have an on-site sewer system (septic), it is required that the zone that covers the on-site sewer is a separate zone.