

The Connection

Winter 1996

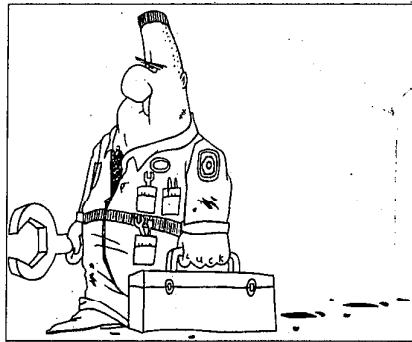
Volume 2 Issue 1

Public vs. Private: Backflow Testing

by Eric W. Foltz

Who should be testing and maintaining Backflow Prevention Assemblies? Should this work be performed by the water suppliers or left to private industry? The question of whether it is right or wrong for a water supplier to provide backflow testing services was raised recently when I was informed that a Southern California Water Supplier had recently adopted a program whereby they would provide testing services to their customers. I do not necessarily think that there is a right or wrong regarding this issue. I do think that it does raise some interesting questions with regards to the role of government and the administration of Cross-Connection Control programs.

The issue of Private vs. Public has been an issue in municipal politics for a number of years now. Many services that were once provided exclusively by public agencies are now being provided by private industry. Trash collection, landscape maintenance and in some areas even operation of water and sewer systems are services that once were



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almost completely within the scope of public agency responsibilities. Most of these services that are now provided by private companies are done so for one

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simple reason. The private companies can provide a comparable level of service for less. What do we call this concept? Competition.

When we look at backflow

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Approval of Shutoff valves for Backflow Preventers

How many of you testers out there are aware that replacing the shutoff valves on an approved backflow prevention assembly with any valves other than those that the assembly went through the approval process with, invalidates the approval? According to the Foundation for Cross-Connection Control and Hydraulic Research at the University of Southern California's approved list: "The backflow prevention assemblies shown on this list have been evaluated with a specific set of shutoff valves as an integral part of the assembly. The use of any shutoff valve on a specific assembly, other than those listed for that specific assembly invalidates the approval." As a tester, this is important for you to know. Some water suppliers have been known to pursue enforcing penalties against testers who install unapproved shutoff valves, in addition to the inconvenience to the customer that results when you have to go back out and redo the job. Your best bet is to either call the local water supplier or the Foundation to find out which valves are acceptable.

Foundation for Cross-Connection Control & Hydraulic Research, U.S.C.
213-740-2032

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testing and the question of private vs. public, there are a few things that we should keep in mind:

1. A backflow prevention assembly is a piece of equipment installed to protect the public health.

2. Protecting the public health is more important than the Public vs. Private issue.

3. Although each water supplier must adhere to the requirements of Title 17, California Code of Regulations (T-17, C.C.R.) each water supplier also has it's own ordinance passed by it's own Board or Council.

4. Management at different water agencies will have differing views on how the program should be run.

5. Water Suppliers are responsible first and foremost to their customers.

With these things in mind, I would like to address why some water agencies see fit to do the testing within their jurisdictions, excluding or competing with private industry.

According to T-17, C.C.R., "Section 7584. Responsibility

and Scope of Program

The water supplier's cross-connection control program shall for the purposes of addressing the requirements of Sections 7585 through 7605 include, but not be limited to, the following elements:

(e) The establishment of a procedure or system for testing backflow preventers (T-17, C.C.R.)"

This does not specify who will do the testing, it only says that there must be a system for getting it done, therefore there is no such thing as a right to test, there is a privilege to test. Who does this testing is further specified in *Section 7605 (b) "Backflow preventers shall be tested by persons who have demonstrated their competency in testing these devices to the water supplier or health agency. (T-17, C.C.R.)"*

This section basically gives the water supplier the power to determine for themselves who they feel are qualified to test backflow preventers. They may say plumbers, they may say persons possessing business licenses or they may determine that only their own personnel are qualified.

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Articles submitted will be considered on a case by case basis. Articles printed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of the Southern California Chapter ABPA or the American Backflow Prevention Association.



Tips For Testers

by Eric W. Foltz

There are a number of factors which will affect your success or failure as a backflow prevention assembly tester here in Southern California. In the past seven years I have seen testing companies come and go. I have also observed and taken note of what seems to work and I would like to share my observations with you.

1. **Knowledge is power.** You've heard this before and it is true. The more that you know the more that you will grow. You need to be good at testing, troubleshooting and repair. Continue your education until you feel confident testing or repairing any type or size assembly that you could possibly come up against out in the field.

2. **Know the rules.** There are over 300 water suppliers in Southern California, 150 Building Departments, 8 County Health Agencies, each of these agencies may have different requirements with regards to the testing done within their jurisdictions. Certifications, business licenses, permits may be different just by crossing a street in some areas. Do your homework and find out what those requirements are.

3. **It is always easier to keep a customer than it is to find a new one.** Good customer service will go a long way in maintaining a good strong customer base. The

good testing companies that I have seen tend to service the same customers year after year with very little turnover. They are looking to the long-term relationship instead of the short-term profit.

4. **Neatness counts.** Many times the only contact that you ever have with a customer or a water purveyor is that test report. You need to realize that the test

report is a reflection of you and your company. The image that you

project is equally important. If you look and act like a professional you will be treated as one.

5. **Give something back to the industry.** This is something that I

am a firm believer in. The more that you put into something, the more you will receive. The easiest and most effective way for you to do this is to support the education and public awareness efforts of the various schools and associations that exist. An educated public will support backflow and will support the laws when they are brought up for review. An educated public will insure the continued success of the backflow prevention programs here in Southern California.

These are just a few tips. I'm sure that there are many more and we would love to hear them. If you have any that you wouldn't mind divulging, please let us know.

Southern California Tester & Specialist Classes

Rancho Santiago College - Orange Co. 714-564-4545

University of Southern California
F.C.C.C. & H.R. - Los Angeles 213-740-2032

University of Riverside - Riverside 909-787-4105

Palomar College - San Diego 619-744-1150

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Whether they are right or wrong in what they determine their qualifications are, the fact remains that they do have the power to determine and enforce those standards. What reasons could a water supplier have for doing their own testing?

1. They have received enough complaints about private testers that they figure it is easier to just do it themselves.

2. Generate revenue to offset the costs of administering their program.

3. They see doing the testing themselves as providing a benefit to their customers.

What are some reasons to prevent the water supplier from doing the testing?

1. Liability - Pure and simple. There are many things going on within a customers water system which could be affected by a malfunctioning backflow preventer.

2. Time - The person running the program must be available for surveys and dealing with customers. There are very few programs that have the man-power to run an effective program and do all of the testing.

3. Conflict of Interest - If there are fee's associated with the testing program there may be a perceived incentive for the water supplier to require assemblies where they are not necessary in order to generate revenue.

4. Competition - Who does the testing should be determined by who can do it the most efficiently. Monopoly over anything does not lend itself to promoting efficiency.

Where do we draw the line when

determining which services should be provided by whom? Should there even be a line or should it simply be a matter of efficiency? Most people have no problem with the testing being done by private industry, but what about the Cross-Connection Programs themselves? What about the surveys done by the water and health officials? Should these also be done by private companies? In some areas of the country, they are. Which direction will Southern California go? Which direction should it go? There is only one answer to these questions and that is: Whichever way most benefits the public. When we look at backflow prevention, that is the most important thing to remember. The purpose behind the program is not to promote government jobs or private industry profits but to protect the public health. When it comes to the testing and maintenance of backflow preventers the only question is: Who can do it more efficiently both in level of service and in cost to the customer.

The issue of public vs. private providing services will likely continue on for years to come in municipalities across the country. Whether it is right or wrong in reference to backflow testing is a matter of opinion and perception depending on which side of the issue you are on. Resolving differences will be dependent upon both sides educating and cooperating with each other.



Stolen Backflow Preventers

Man. Mod. Size SN#

Cucamonga Co. Water Dist.
909-483-7440

Wilkins 975	2"	60798
Watts 909qtml	1.5"	227636
Febco 825y	2"	A2859
Febco 825y	1.5"	Q9612
Febco 805y	1.5"	A6241
Febco 825y	1"	S3315
Wilkins 575	2"	W57747
Rainbird DCA	2"	84862
Rainbird DCA	2"	80301
Febco 805y	2"	25773
Febco 825y	1.5"	K6678
Febco 825y	1.5"	T2660
Watts 009qtml	2"	54155
Febco 825y	1.5"	U3168
Febco 825y	1.5"	L3627
Febco 825y	1.5"	L3521

It seems to be official at this point, Febco is the assembly of choice for thieves in Southern California. So far, of the 96 assemblies that we have had reported to us, 65 have been Febco's. One interesting bit of information that you may want to take note of is that painted assemblies so far have proved to be safe from theft. Dirty brass is only worth about half that of clean brass.

**To report a stolen
assembly call:
714-837-1660x209
or fax:
714-472-5033**

What is the Southern California Chapter of the American Backflow Prevention Association?

The Southern California Chapter - ABPA. Founded in 1992 to provide education and technical assistance to all people in order to protect public health by protecting drinking water through effective cross-connection control.

Who should belong to the Chapter?

Membership is open to anyone with an interest in cross-connection control and maintaining water quality standards.

Membership currently consists of over 100, Water Suppliers, Health Officials, Backflow Testers, Building Officials, and Manufacturers Representatives who are dedicated to providing education and public awareness to the hazards of backflow and unprotected cross-connections.

These members realize that the key to healthy cross-connection control programs in Southern California is education and public awareness.

How can you become a member of this exciting organization?

Simply fill out the application form on page 7, and mail it with your check or money order to the address listed at the bottom of the form.

Other Organizations:

The San Diego County Cross-Connection Control Advisory Committee

The San Diego County Cross-Connection Control Advisory Committee is composed of representatives of various water agencies and related organizations in San Diego County, as well as areas outside the county, that have an interest in cross-connection control. The group holds meetings every other month at various locations around San Diego County. The time and location is included on the Committee Minutes that are mailed out to those requesting to be on the mailing list.

Chairman: Rick Bird
Sweetwater Authority
(619)420-1413

If you would like to be included on the mailing list, contact Dick Carlson at (619)338-2206.

There are no fees involved in attending these meetings and all are welcome to attend.

Thank you for your contributions!

Bavco/Jim Purzycki for providing the classroom and excellent instruction at the December Repair Class

T. Christy Enterprises/Conbraco for providing lunch at the December repair class

Cisco/Ames for providing danishes, orange juice etc... at the December Repair Class

Delco Sales/Watts for assisting with the December Repair Class

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Fax 805-499-9084

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Reclaimed Water Needs

800-BLU-GLUE



Duke Products

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"E-Z 900" with Auto Calibration
Model B226A Mechanical Differential Gauge
Sight Tubes - Hoses - Fittings

Cecil Pearson

714-581-7200



Wilkins Valves

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Westmark Enterprises

310-921-6770



Ames Co.

Valves & Backflow Assemblies
Hydrocowl Enclosures

Represented by

Cisco

714-633-0698

WATTS REGULATOR

Hot Box Enclosures

Represented by
Delco Sales

Steve Klapp

213-890-9250

FEBCO

Backflow Prevention Assemblies

Represented by

PMR Associates

Doug Chandler

818-998-0083

EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

We have educational flyers available! Custom printing with your name, address and phone.

Backflow Protection for Irrigation Systems
Backflow Protection for Hose Bibbs

For a sample and ordering information, contact Eric Foltz at 714-837-1660x209

New Chapter Members

E.R. Block Plumbing & Heating
Ford's Backflow Testing & Repair
Hagen Backflow Testing Co.
Jeff Richardson Backflow Testing & Repair
Joe Carlos Plumbing
O'Connor Sales
Parkview Landscape & Sprinkler Co.
Scott Waltz Irrigation
Steffen Plumbing
Utility Enclosure Systems

Leaders have a significant role in creating the state of mind that is the society. They can serve as symbols of the moral unity of the society. They can express the values that hold the society together. Most important, they can conceive and articulate goals that lift people out of their petty preoccupations, carry them above the conflicts that tear a society apart, and unite them in the pursuit of objectives worthy of their best efforts.

John W. Gardner

Southern California Chapter - ABPA Membership Application

Name: _____ Title: _____

Company: _____ Ph: _____

Address: _____ Fax: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Membership is non-transferable

Membership \$42.00

Includes National Dues

Prepayment of dues required to process Membership Application

(Check or Money Order only - No Purchase Orders) Payment enclosed made payable to:

Southern California Chapter - ABPA

P.O. Box 712 Cypress CA 90630

Upcoming Events, Classes & Seminars...

The 1996 Landscape Industry Show

February 14 & 15
8 AM - 6 PM

Long Beach Convention
Center
Long Beach, Ca

We will have a display
booth so stop on by and
introduce yourself.

U.S.C., F.C.C.C.&H.R.

9th Edition Test
Procedure Update
March 27th
6-8 PM

City of Oxnard
Water Yard
251 S. Hayes Ave.
Oxnard, CA

Free Refreshments
Contact:
James Corella
805-385-8155

3rd Annual Orange County Backflow Testers Update

March 20th
6-9 PM

City of Santa Ana
Council Chambers
20 Civic Center Dr.
Santa Ana, Ca.

*(off Flower or Santa Ana Blvd.)
(you will need to pay for parking)*
Contact: Martin Freibert
714-667-3757

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American Backflow Prevention Assn.
P.O. Box 712
Cypress, Ca. 90630

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Cypress, Ca
Permit No. 94

inside...

Backflow Testing: Public or Private?
Shutoff Valve Approval
Tips for Testers