

Building Matters

BACKFLOW PREVENTION

Protect your home's water supply

Sherry Sparks

Fortunately we live in a society where you can turn on your faucet and get clean, safe drinking water. However, the drinking water system can become contaminated or polluted if there is a reversal of normal water flow to a home or business. This is called *backflow*, which can be very serious and even fatal. Backflow can occur when the water supply is cut, such as in water main breaks or during periods of high water flow due to nearby firefighting.

To prevent this from occurring, backflow devices are required by law and they must be installed in accordance with building and plumbing codes.

BACKFLOW PREVENTION PROGRAM

The City of Moncton started a cross-connection control program to protect the municipal water supply from being contaminated. A cross-connection is a permanent or temporary piping assembly that may allow your drinking water to become contaminated if a backflow condition occurs. The program identifies current and possible connections between the drinking water system and any source of pollution or contamination.

Once one is identified, the property owners and/or tenants are required to install proper backflow devices.

Another aspect of the program is keeping records of all installed testable backflow prevention devices to ensure that they are tested each year.

BACKFLOW PREVENTER

This mechanical device stops contaminants from getting into the drinking water. Some examples of testable backflow preventers used for moderate to severe hazards that are tested annually include:

- Reduced-pressure principle assemblies

- Double-check valve assemblies
- Pressure vacuum breaker assemblies

Non-testable devices used for minor hazards include:

- Residential dual check valves
- Hose connection vacuum breakers

All plumbing alterations related to the installation of a backflow preventer require a plumbing permit. For permit information or inquires, contact the Building Inspection department at City Hall at 853-3470.

TESTING AND MAINTENANCE

The homeowner is responsible for ensuring the backflow prevention device is always in satisfactory operating conditions. Testing of residential dual check valve backflow prevention devices is completed on a five- to seven-year cycle and testable backflow prevention devices must be done at the time of installation and on an annual basis thereafter. The device must be retested if any maintenance or repairs are performed on it.

The City of Moncton Building Inspection department will send a notice to the customer advising them when a test is required on the device. Testing can only be done by a licensed plumber who has a license to complete backflow testing. All test results must be submitted to the Building Inspection department.

The City of Moncton's Building Inspection department is responsible for safeguarding life, property, and public welfare by ensuring compliance to property and zoning by-laws, whether it is in the area of design, construction, or alteration of buildings.

Sherry Sparks is the director of Building Inspection for the City of Moncton. She holds a diploma in Civil Engineering Technology and a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering. Sherry has been working in the field for 27 years, is currently President of the New Brunswick Building Officials Association and became a fellow of Engineers Canada in 2008. For more information on building guidelines and permits, visit the Housing and Building section of our website (moncton.ca), e-mail questions to info@moncton.ca, or call 856-4375.