



Protecting Your Home Against Cross-Connections

Without proper protection devices, something as useful as your garden hose has the potential to poison your home's water supply. In fact, over half of the nation's cross-connections involve unprotected garden hoses.

What is a Cross-Connection?

A cross-connection is a physical connection (piping configuration) between the public drinking water system and anything else including another water supply that can allow pollutants or contaminants to backflow into the public drinking water system.

What is Backflow?

It is when the water is flowing in the opposite direction from its normal flow, or in other words, flowing backwards. With the direction of the flow reversed, due to a change in pressures, backflow can allow contaminants to enter our drinking water system through cross-connections.

A potentially hazardous cross-connection occurs every time someone uses a garden hose sprayer to apply insecticides or herbicides to their lawn. Another cross-connection occurs when someone uses their garden hose to clear a stoppage in their sewer line, or to fill up a watering trough. Please do not leave your hoses in a watering trough and then turn the water off, this creates a backward flow of water and sucks the dirty trough water into the your home and into town water lines.

Without a backflow prevention device between your hose and hose bibb (spigot or outside faucet), the contents of the hose and anything it is connected to can back flow into the piping system and contaminate your drinking water.

This hazardous situation sometimes can affect more than a single home. In 1977, an entire town in North Dakota had to be rationed drinking water from the National Guard water trucks while the town's water distribution system was flushed and disinfected following contamination by DDT. Investigation determined that two residents spraying DDT had more direct cross-connections to their homes. A backflow condition had occurred, sucking the DDT through the home piping systems and out into the town's water distribution system.

Backflows due to cross-connection are serious plumbing problems. They can cause sickness and even death. However, they can be avoided by the use of proper protection devices. Each spigot at your home should have a hose bibb vacuum breaker installed. This is a simple, inexpensive device which can be purchased at any plumbing or hardware store. Installation is as easy as attaching your yard hose to the spigot.

For further information:

Utah Chapter of American Backflow
Prevention Association: 80-1-949-5512

State of Utah Division of Drinking Water
801-536-4200