



# Mount Pleasant

## — North Carolina

### Backflow Prevention Devices Common Questions and Answers

#### **What Is a Backflow Prevention Device?**

A **backflow** prevention assembly is used to protect water supplies from contamination or pollution. In water supply systems, water is normally maintained at a significant pressure to enable water to flow from the tap, shower etc. When pressure fails or is reduced as may happen if a water main bursts, pipes freeze or there is unexpectedly high demand on the water system, the pressure in the pipe may be reduced and may allow contaminated water from your home or business, or from other sources to be drawn back into the system. The water being drawn back into the system may have become contaminated by chemicals, poisons or other health hazards.

#### **Is the Town of Mount Pleasant mandated to require backflow prevention devices?**

Yes. The Town of Mount Pleasant is mandated by North Carolina Administrative Code Title 15A Subchapter 18c Section .0406 (b) and its associated appendixes, as well as the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act, to require that facilities which pose an actual or potential threat of contamination install and maintain backflow prevention devices. North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources can levy large fines for failure to implement the minimum backflow prevention program.

#### **Is my house required to have a Backflow Prevention Device**

No. All single residential water meters in Mount Pleasant currently meet backflow requirements.

#### **Is my Business required to have a have a Backflow prevention device?**

Possibly, the law establishes the minimum standards for facilities requiring backflow prevention devices. The law also dictates that the type of device required is dependent upon the type of facility. If you are unsure if your facility already has a device or need help determining the type of device required, please do not hesitate to contact the Public Works Dept. at 704-436-2353, a licensed plumber, or a licensed backflow prevention tester.

#### **What if I do not put in a backflow prevention device even though I am required?**

If you do not install a required backflow prevention device, you may be subject to fines and open your business to significant civil liability. Moreover, you may be endangering the health and life of the public by unknowingly contaminating the drinking water.

## **Actual Backflow Cases**

*Cross Connection Control Manual, 2003, Environmental Protection Agency Office of Water*

The drinking water in a mortuary in a large southern city was contaminated with human blood, due to the low pressure and use of aspirator in the embalming room.

In April on 1986, a the water supply of town in North Carolina was contaminated with pesticide when a water main broke at the same time that a pest control business was filling a pesticide tank. The City had to bring in tanker trucks of water for the effected citizens.

Several citizens were treated in the emergency room for chemical burns after sodium hydroxide back-siphoned into the water supply of a small municipality in Alabama in 1986.

In Illinois, in 1982, six dialysis patients succumbed to poisoning due to a cross connection between an air condition cooling tower and the public water supply.

*Pacific Northwest Section of the American Water Works Association, Summary of Backflow Incidents*

In November of 1993, in Wilson North Carolina x-ray development chemicals backflowed into the drinking water of a clinic when pressure in the city system changed.

North Carolina 1974 -The backflow of a boiler treatment chemical into the water system caused several children to become ill after consuming contaminated soft drinks at a fast food restaurant.

**There is many more cases like these, some causing disastrous public health effects.**