

In 1974, Congress passed the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) to protect the public health by regulating the nation's public water supply. Since 1974, the law has been amended in 1986 and 1996 to incorporate needed actions to protect the public's water supply. Under this law, the City of Dubuque (the water purveyor) is prohibited from installing or maintaining a water service connection to a consumer's water system within its jurisdiction, unless the public potable water supply is protected against backflow by an approved prevention assembly(s) installed at the service connection or point of delivery.

The City of Dubuque, the water purveyor, expects their water to be clean and safe for all Dubuque residents. The City goes to great lengths to ensure that the water delivered to our citizens is of the highest quality. When water leaves the City of Dubuque treatment plant, it is in its freshest and purest state. However, during delivery, there is a danger that the water may become contaminated or polluted from sources out of our control. This can happen when the water supply main, pipe, or service line is connected to equipment containing a substance not fit for drinking. These "cross connections" may be permanent or temporary and could cause the delivery of an unusable product, cause illness, or even death.

Federal law requires the City of Dubuque to protect the water supply from potential contamination or pollution. The City has developed and implemented an ordinance that requires all industrial, commercial, and irrigation customers to install approved backflow prevention assemblies. These assemblies must be installed on the customers' property before branching to a private system.

The City of Dubuque administers a cross connection control program to minimize contamination of the potable water supply and makes every effort to ensure the safety of the drinking water. Customers have the prime responsibility for preventing contaminants and pollutants from entering the water supply system.

Backflows due to cross-connections are serious plumbing problems; however, they can be avoided by using the proper protection devices. Be involved in keeping your water safe from contamination. 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. Without a backflow prevention assembly between your hose and hose-bibb (spigot or outside faucet), the contents of the hose and anything it is connected to can backflow into the piping system and contaminate your drinking water. This hazardous situation sometimes can affect more than a single home. 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 garden hose to a spigot.