



BACKFLOW: WHAT IS IT AND WHY IS IT DANGEROUS?

Water in Missoula Water's distribution system is sanitary. Once water leaves the public distribution system and flows into the customer's plumbing, Missoula Water loses sanitary control over the water and by law cannot allow it to return or "backflow" into the distribution system.

Backflow contamination may occur when:

- A water supply line is connected to equipment containing a non-potable (unfit to drink) substance.
- "Cross-connection"* happens when a water service line is connected to a tank filled with acid, or a hose may drop into a bucket of cleaning solution.

* Definition: **Cross-Connections** are any unprotected actual or potential connection between a potable water system and any other water source or any used water, industrial fluid, gas, or any other substance. These cross-connections, whether permanent or temporary, are dangerous if no protective measures are taken.

- Pressure in the distribution system drops, siphoning water or other materials from the consumer's system into the distribution system. For example, if you apply herbicide using an aspirator connected to a garden hose, under the right conditions, the herbicide can be drawn from its container and into your household plumbing. Backflow can also siphon any substance which is in contact with the water system through an unprotected cross-connection. Consumers must be aware of cross-connections and how to prevent them or protect such connections with the appropriate backflow prevention assembly. To read a summary of our Cross- Connection/Backflow Program Requirements go to: [WG.2: Cross-Connection/Backflow Protection Program](#). If you would like more information on backflow protection, please contact Travis Rice at waterbackflow@ci.missoula.mt.us or 552-6756.