

April 2, 2014

SERVICE CENTER – 55 E. Moore Street  
Walla Walla, WA 99362-1172

|                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| ADMINISTRATION | 509.527.4463 |
| ENGINEERING    | 509.527.4537 |
| SANITATION     | 509.527.4479 |
| LANDFILL       | 509.527.4591 |
| STREETS        | 509.527.4363 |
| WATER          | 509.527.4380 |
| FAX            | 509.524.7960 |

Dear Customer:

Thank you for participating in last year's Cross Connection Control Program Survey. You were one of the respondents who requested to receive survey results. The following is a summary of the results and what action has been taken.

**Number of respondents:** 256

**How much do you currently pay for your annual backflow assembly test?**

\$30-\$40 (44.5%), Greater than \$40 (24.2%), Do not recall (7%), Have not had my device tested (7%), Less than \$20 (2.7%).

**Would you be interested in a City administered program that tests your backflow assembly device annually and completes the required report?**

Yes (64.8%) No (35.2%)

**If yes, would you be willing to pay no more than \$50.00 or less annually?**

Yes (56.3%) No (43.8%)

**If the City does the testing of your cross connection assembly and charges for the service on your utility bill, would you prefer to pay the fee as:**

A one-time expense each year when performed (59.4%), Spread the cost over 12 months on your monthly utility bill (40.6%)

These responses indicated that the majority preferred a City-administered Backflow Device Testing Program and the cost to residents should not exceed \$50 per test. Staff then evaluated both contracting out and in-house full-time labor options for providing this service, however we determined that it would not be possible in either option to provide a City-administered Backflow Device Testing Program at a cost less than \$50 per test. On March 10, 2014, staff presented a recommendation to City Council that there be no change in the current backflow testing program - that the public continue utilizing the services of a private, state certified backflow assembly tester for annual testing.

Survey respondents were also provided an opportunity to make general comments or ask specific questions. On the attached sheet you will find responses to the three most frequently asked questions.

If you have any other questions or would like further information, please contact Adrian Sutor, Water Distribution Supervisor at 527-4380. Again, thank you for participating in the survey.

Sincerely,



Adrian Sutor

Water Distribution Supervisor

### **Why me? My neighbor has an irrigation system and they have not had their system tested.**

Currently, the City has 8,700 existing residential customers connected to the City water system. Out of the 8,700 customers, 1,200 of them have permitted backflow devices. The City is working on completing residential assessments throughout the City to ensure all services that have underground irrigation systems are identified and included in the annual testing program. The City is moving forward to complete these assessments in 2014 with the goal of having all assessments entered into the system by 2015.

When a new underground irrigation system is installed, the homeowner is required to obtain a permit. Some homeowners did not obtain a permit and therefore we have no record of the system being installed. As we become aware of existing irrigation systems and as time permits, we will be verifying and adding these properties to our database.

As authorized by Walla Walla Municipal Code 13.05.070, if a home owner refuses to install or test a backflow preventer after notification by the City, the City may refuse to serve them with water until they meet the requirements.

### **Why is the City requiring us to have backflow devices installed?**

When water flows backward through the water supply system, it is called a backflow, which is caused by back siphonage or back pressure. Backflow preventers are required for all underground irrigation systems (connected to City water) to prevent backflow events from contaminating the public water system. This includes irrigation systems that use an alternative water source but have City water available as a backup, whether or not it is in use or not.

The danger comes when a harmful substance (lawn fertilizer, pet waste, etc) comes into contact with an irrigation system or a garden hose. If the pressure in the City's water main drops in the vicinity where a residence is located who has an irrigation system with no backflow prevention device, contaminated or polluted water may be allowed to enter the public water main compromising the public drinking water supply. To prevent such an occurrence, the City is required by State and Federal Law to require backflow prevention devices on private irrigation systems to protect the public drinking water system.

### **Why is yearly testing required?**

Testing at the time of installation and at least annually thereafter is required by State and Federal Law. A backflow assembly test confirms the backflow prevention device is functioning properly. Mechanical backflow preventers have internal seals, springs and moving parts that are subject to wear and have to be tested with properly calibrated equipment. This test must be conducted by a State Certified Backflow Assembly Tester. Yearly testing is the best assurance that backflow devices are working properly and keeping the public water supply safe.

Additional information on Backflow can be found on the City's website at: [www.wallawallawa.gov](http://www.wallawallawa.gov). Search for "Backflow" or select it under the "Quick Links" drop-down menu on the main page.