

The Repair Guys

In our line of work, we field questions from contractors and technicians concerning repairs, installations, and general backflow prevention practices. We'd like to share some questions we receive and our answers. Everyone has different opinions on these subjects and we would like to hear yours. Contact us with your questions and ideas via email at: imark@backflowparts.com or mail us at American Backflow Products Co., P.O. Box 37025, Tallahassee, FL. 32315.

QUESTION —

In the last three articles, we discussed some ideas about troubleshooting backflow prevention assemblies. We have discussed some basic concepts of troubleshooting, what information is needed and how to setup and use that information to help diagnose the problem. Now, all you have to do is deal with the most important part of the whole process...the customer. Is there any way to troubleshoot the customer?

*'Backflow Prevention'
A foreign language to
your customers?*

Mark -

Absolutely. Some people call it customer service, we like to call it troubleshooting the customer. Actually, it is nothing more than educating the customer. Have you ever wondered why some people are happy to pay \$75 for a tune-up on their automobile, but go ballistic if they are charged \$40 to test their backflow assembly? Do you find yourself ready to defend yourself from a customer if for some reason the assembly fails and needs repair? If the answer is yes, then you are not alone. Sometimes dealing with a customer who has no knowledge about backflow prevention is the hardest part of being a backflow technician. So, how do we make it easier? Simple, you must educate and explain to the customer what is happening.

- Jason

As technicians, we usually take the knowledge we have for granted. Let's take a minute to look at it from a customer's standpoint. First, he was informed by his city agency that he must have a backflow assembly installed on his property to protect the water system. On top of that, he must have it tested every year to make sure it is working properly and if it fails, he then must have it repaired. Now, we all know what this person is thinking, 'I've been here 65 years and have never seen or heard of backflow,' 'The assembly was working great until you tested it,' or 'This is just another way for the government to tax me.' If he gets mad enough and has plenty of time to spend, he is probably going to start calling his mayor, county commissioner and any other legislator that he can, to complain about backflow prevention. You will probably get an ear-full as well.

Mark -

The key to making the job easier is to take a few extra minutes to explain how and what needs to be done and why it needs to be done. The technician out in the field may be the only source of information this customer has about backflow. If you help him have a better understanding then you are less likely to be abused for doing your job. It may also keep him off the phone to his legislator. Remember, you will probably never find a person that waves a 'Go Backflow' banner when you come to test or repair an assembly. What we need to do is make sure that he does not wave an 'Anti Backflow' banner. By spending some extra time to inform the customer, we help to promote our industry as a very professional one. It can also help him understand the benefit he gets for the money he spends.

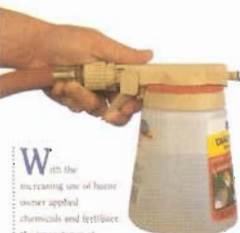




Safeguard Drinking Water From Hose Connected Backflow Pollution



WOODFORD MANUFACTURING COMPANY



With the increasing use of house owner applied chemicals and fertilizers, the importance of backflow protection for the water supply is paramount. And even though municipal plumbing codes do not require ASSE 1052 Approved Vacuums and Hydrants, it is an excellent idea to install the protection anyway. Better backflow prevention is a safeguard the public needs beyond a doubt. Let's provide it.

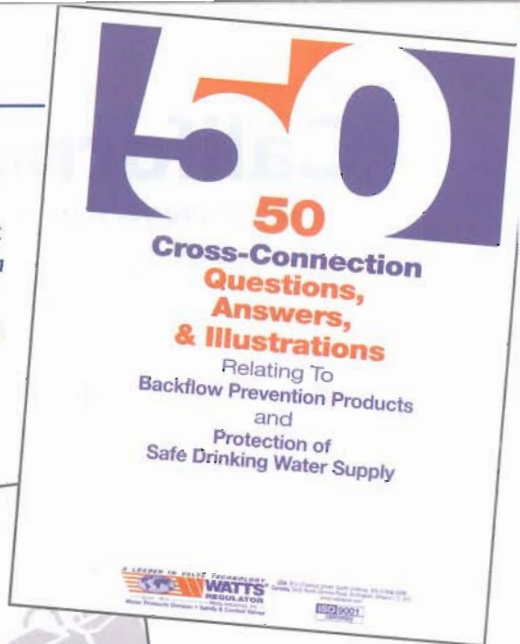
- Jason

When the customer spends his money on a tune-up, his benefit is that his car runs better. That is a benefit he can understand. When the customer spends money on his backflow preventer his only benefit is that he is not sick or dead. This sounds like a pretty good deal, but try to convince the customer of that. Even with a good understanding of backflow, the customer probably will not jump up and down with joy, but if he realizes the overall benefit he may not keep that bad taste he has about the backflow industry.

Mark -

As we close this series on troubleshooting, I would like to leave the technician with something to think about. When the tables are turned and we are the customer, we depend on the technician working on our car, VCR or washing machine to be able to troubleshoot and explain the problem correctly, so it does not cost us an arm or a leg and we understand what they are doing. As a backflow tester or a technician, we need to have the same ability, because your customer is depending on you as well.

Several industry manufacturer's have produced informative literature that will be helpful in making a presentation to your customer. Typically, these are available to you at no charge - simply for the asking.



Telephone contacts for the sample literature pieces shown in this article are as follows:

- FEBCO 800.767.1234
- Watts Regulator 800.617.3274
- Woodford Mfg. 800.621.6032

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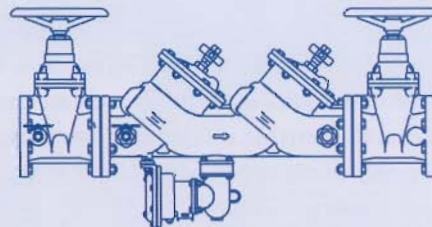
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