

Residential Irrigation Backflow Testing FAQs

- 1) **Why do I need a backflow preventer on my lawn irrigation system?** A backflow preventer is a mechanical device that is required by the Michigan Plumbing Code. It prevents contaminated water that may be present in your irrigation system from being siphoned back into the potable (drinking) water system due to a loss of pressure.
- 2) **Why is the City requiring me to test my backflow preventer?** Part 14 of the administrative rules promulgated under the Michigan Safe Drinking Water Act (P.A. 399 of 1976) and the Michigan Plumbing Code regulate backflow testing frequency.
- 3) **How often do I need to have my backflow preventer tested?** The Michigan Plumbing Code requires all backflow preventers to be tested annually. The Grand Rapids Water System requests a current year copy of the backflow test once every five years as required by Administrative Rule R325.11404 (d) promulgated under the Michigan Safe Drinking Water Act (P.A. 399 of 1976).
- 4) **What does a backflow test consist of?** There are specific test procedures for each type of backflow preventer. The tests mainly consist of measuring differential pressure across check valves, air inlets and relief valve openings to ensure check valves are holding tight and air inlets and relief valves are opening as required.
- 5) **I received a backflow test notice. I had my backflow preventer tested two years ago when my home was constructed. Do I need to have it tested again?** Yes the backflow preventer will need to be tested. Everyone with an irrigation system in your backflow test zone received a notice and is required to submit a current year backflow test.
- 6) **A friend of mine received a backflow test notice. Why didn't I?** We may not have identified your residence as having an irrigation system or their residence may be located in a different backflow testing zone. The Grand Rapids Water System is divided into 5 different residential backflow test zones. If you are in the same zone as your friend and didn't receive a backflow test notice, please call 616-456-4170 and we will send you a blank test form and add you to our database.
Zone 1: From 4 Mile Rd south to Leonard – 2017 – 2022 – 2027...
Zone 2: From Leonard south to Wealthy – 2018 – 2023 – 2028...
Zone 3: From Wealthy south to Burton – 2019 – 2024 – 2029...
Zone 4: From Burton south to 36th St – 2020 – 2025 – 2030...
Zone 5: From 36th St south to 60th St – 2021 – 2026 – 2031...
- 7) **I haven't used my irrigation system in several years. Do I still need to have the backflow tested?** Not necessarily, but one of two things will need to occur; the backflow preventer will need to be tested or the irrigation system will need to be physically disconnected from your home's plumbing system. If you choose to disconnect the irrigation system, the piping will need to be cut and capped in the basement and outside where it goes into the ground and the piping and backflow preventer between those two points removed. Once the system is disconnected, please email a before and after picture along with your address to waterbp@grcity.us so we can update our records.
- 8) **I don't have an irrigation system. What do I need to do?** Please email us at waterbp@grcity.us or leave a voice message at 616-456-4170 so we can investigate and update our records.
- 9) **Where do I find a certified tester?** Most plumbing contractors employ ASSE certified backflow testers.

- 10) **Can my irrigation contractor test my backflow preventer?** Backflow preventers are required to be tested by a licensed plumber who is employed by a plumbing contractor and is ASSE certified to test backflow preventers.
- 11) **I lost my backflow test form. How can I get another copy?** If you are not able to find your backflow test form, please call 311 or 616-456-3000 and customer service will send you a copy.

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