

What is a cross connection and why do we want to prevent them?

What do you think the chances are that you have a connection to City of Whitewater's distribution system that could threaten public safety? Although you most likely don't THINK your connection could be dangerous, it's possible that it is.

One of the many threats to our drinking water supply is known as a cross-connection (CC). A CC is the point at which a non-drinking water substance can possibly come in contact with drinking water. Connections as seemingly innocent as a water softener, dish washer, washing machine, sprinkler system, hot tub, or ornamental pond can easily enable contaminants to enter potable (drinking) water lines via backflow. Customers install potential CCs like these and other water-using equipment every day, but, they are often unaware of the potential danger that lurks in the pipes as a result.

Backflow, caused by backsiphonage and/or backpressure, is the unwanted reverse flow of non-potable water back into a water system. Backflow can allow bacteria, chemicals or physical contaminants to enter the water system if CCs are uncontrolled.

The Whitewater Water Utility takes every precaution possible to prevent CC backflow from entering our distribution system. The Utility's Cross-Connection Control (CCC) Program ensures that customers eliminate CCs whenever possible and control CCs that can't be eliminated by installing approved backflow preventers. To better protect public health, the Wisconsin DNR has CCC regulations for public water systems. All public water systems are required to develop and implement CCC programs.

We are committed to protecting the health of the people in the City of Whitewater by ensuring safe and reliable drinking water," said Rick Lien, Water Utility Superintendent.

The Water Utility does inspections of homes and buildings to determine if there are any CC issues and to ensure that appropriate backflow preventers are installed. Some water-using equipment has built-in backflow protection in the form of a physical air gap. But, if CC hazards are present, customers may be required to install a backflow preventer at the meter to "control" the CC and protect the public water system.

These efforts will protect the public water system, but to protect the health of building occupants, customers should consult the Water Utility for assistance with CCC.

When should I be concerned about CCs? Anytime you modify the plumbing and/or install a new plumbing fixture or water-using equipment, or if you ever notice an unusual color, taste or smell from your water, you should contact us and schedule a CCC inspection.

Contact: Water Utility 473-0543

Cross Connection Examples

- Wash basins and service sinks
- Hose bibs
- Irrigation sprinkler systems
- Auxiliary water supplies
- Laboratory & aspirator equipment
- Photo developing equipment
- Processing tanks
- Boilers
- Water recirculating systems
- Swimming pools
- Solar heat systems
- Fire sprinkler systems