

The Importance of Continuing **YOUR** Education

Written By: James Probst

I have been teaching and instructing Backflow Prevention for the better part of the last decade at Test Gauge & Backflow Supply. Currently I'm approved to certify testers through the American Society of Sanitation Engineering (ASSE), Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM), and Blue Grass Cross Connection Prevention Association (BGCCPA).

I have had the privilege of training and meeting with people involved in the Backflow Protection Industry throughout the United States. These introductions frequently lead to very pointed questions and complaints. The complaints stem from mistakes they see being accomplished by other technicians in the field. This is mostly caused by lack of knowledgeable or poor training. Their most popular concern is "These people are giving the backflow profession a bad name."

The issues resulting in complaints are:

1. Passing of failing assemblies
2. Submitting incomplete and or ineligible backflow test reports
3. Improper installation of backflow assemblies for:
 - A. Height and orientation
 - B. Backflow protection against hazard
 - C. Hydraulic condition design (backsiphonage / Backpressure)
 - D. Being subjected to freezing, flooding or excessive heat
 - E. Failure to tag assemblies after testing or using an unapproved state tag
 - F. Failure to submit backflow results to the utility within 30 days

Some of these deficiencies in experience and knowledge may have a catastrophic result should a backflow incident occur. Not staying current on regulations could be viewed by a court of law as negligence, thus causing the person responsible to be liable for any and all consequences as the court's decision. (Pennsylvania Railroad Company vs. Lincoln Trust Company, Admr., 167 NE 721, or 91 Ind. App 28.) (Page 6 IDEM CCC Manual) One more reason recurrent training is paramount for backflow testers.

Below is a list of just a few reasons it is imperative to continuously train yourself as a tester and the importance of doing so:

1. Backflow assemblies are installed to protect the public's health. These assemblies must be installed, tested and repaired correctly by the technician in order to properly protect against backflow contamination.
2. Understanding of newly introduced backflow products into the market ensures any new technology is understood.
3. To ensure that you are testing accurately it is essential that you are knowledgeable in the proper repair and testing procedures. This will increase your competence, and help to ensure your success.
4. Being knowledgeable on newly adopted regulations for federal, state and local agencies ensures proper compliance.

Indiana requires Wastewater Operators, Water Operators and Well Drillers to attend continuing education. Unlike many states with recurrent training, Indiana does not have continuing educational requirements for backflow testers. For this reason, utilities are beginning to create and mandate their own backflow tester training requirements.

With the increased focus on enforcement in the Backflow Industry, it has become imperative that testers continuously strive to ensure that they not only improve their skills and knowledge of the industry, but also be good ambassadors for their profession.

For several years at the state level legislation has been introduced that would require continuing education among backflow testers. As of right now it has not made any headway and there is not a law enforcing continued education which makes your backflow certification a "One Time" certification. Because of this, we strongly encourage all testers to attend refresher and repair courses to ensure they stay current on all the changes that are constantly occurring in the world of Backflow.

Continuing education helps demonstrate professionalism, and helps you establish minimum requirements for accepted skills and knowledge. Taking a sabbatical from backflow testing can lead to a loss of skills and knowledge. Use it or you lose it!

Test Gauge & Backflow Supply's passion is ensuring safe drinking water through education.

Partner with our company and support the protection of our essential water resource