

JEA's Backflow Checkup Program

Best Practice for Residential Testing

Contractors performing backflow-related work for JEA are expected to perform their contractual duties in a diligent and professional manner, and to treat customers courteously. Following the guidelines of this Best Practice document will increase the likelihood that each contractor site visit will result in a successful customer interaction.

Some customers have not received and/or read the letter or email that was sent to them prior to your arrival, and may need a short explanation of why you are there. Basic awareness of how the program works will need to be communicated by the technician to the customer when this occurs. Each technician should have a supply of JEA Backflow Checkup brochures available that may be used to help explain the program.

Appearance is important. Place a "JEA Backflow Testing in Progress" yard sign beside the street or at the entrance into the neighborhood before testing. Customers must be able to easily identify the tester's vehicle and tester as a backflow tester under contract for JEA. JEA is providing yard signs and contractor badge IDs for this purpose. Testers are expected to be respectful of customers and private property. JEA values the customer interactions greatly, and expects contractors to go out of their way to represent JEA in a way that conveys respect each customer.

Approach the residence from the front sidewalk and go to the front door. Knock on the door or ring the doorbell. Provide a moment for anyone at home to answer the door. Be prepared to politely explain why you are there, to test their backflow preventer as required by JEA. If the backflow preventer is not in front of the house ask the resident for permission to access the backflow preventer. Do not enter a backyard or fenced area without permission of the resident. If nobody answers the door right away hang one of the "Backflow Preventer Check-Up Program On-Site Testing Notice" door hangers on the doorknob and proceed to test the backflow preventer. This red and white striped door hanger will provide notice to the resident that you are on-site performing JEA-authorized work if they answer the door after you begin testing.

Once testing is complete fill out the regular "JEA Backflow Preventer Checkup" door hanger with the test results, findings, reason for failure if appropriate, and attach the completed supplementary information page. Replace the red and white door hanger with the regular door hanger. If anyone appears to be at home knock on the door again and explain the test results to the resident if they come to the door. Make sure that everything is in the same condition as when you arrived. Leaks caused during testing must be repaired before leaving the customer site. JEA provides plugs and caps to repair leaking test ports. Care must be taken to prevent breaking shut-off valves. Frozen and badly corroded valves should not be forced to the point of breakage.

Any backflow equipment requiring repair must be identified in the leave-behind door hanger material, and should be discussed with the customer while on-site if they are home. In particular, customers must receive clear instructions on what they need to do to become compliant. A supplementary information page provided by JEA includes information about types of typical failures, basic repair requirements, and space for the vendor to affix a company contact card. The supplementary information page must be completed and attached to the door hanger. During customer conversations and in the leave-behind material the customer must receive the message that they may choose any company to perform backflow repairs, and that JEA has requested your company to provide an estimate

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of costs to make repairs as a reference. Customers may, but are not obligated to use your company for required repair work.

Backflow preventers may be located inside dense foliage or in a place that would potentially cause damage to the vegetation to gain testing access. In this case, if someone is home you may ask them to trim or move the obstructions so that you may perform the test. If nobody is home, or they decline to move the obstruction, just mark it as "inaccessible" on the door hanger and worklist and move on to the next customer site.

JEA's contract requires vendors to review failed test results and repair recommendations with customers within 48 hours if a face-to-face explanation was not provided during the site visit. Customer contact phone numbers are provided for that purpose.

It is the role of the vendor to answer customer questions and concerns quickly and before they seek answers from other, less reliable sources or escalate to JEA. Therefore, it is essential that technicians and employees in contact with customers accurately and clearly communicate program details.

The Backflow Checkup Program is currently testing backflow preventers on two types of residential services, residential irrigation and potable water services at residences with reclaimed water. Although both may utilize the same type of backflow preventer, from a testing standpoint there are significant differences between the two testing programs. Because the main potable water connection to the residence is being tested in reclaimed service areas extra care is required to make sure that the potable water service is not disrupted unexpectedly.

On all backflow preventers shut-off valves that are frozen should not be forced to operate as part of the initial test. If shut-off valves are found in this condition the backflow preventer should be given a 'failed test', and the necessary valve repairs communicated clearly to the customer on the door hanger / supplementary information and verbally. In this case the customer explanation will include the fact that the test could not be completed fully because of the shut-off valve failure, and that there may be other issues discovered with the backflow preventer when the test is completed.

Residential irrigation customers will be paying for the initial backflow test through their JEA utility bill as a separate backflow testing fee. Reclaimed water customers will have the costs of the test covered within the current rate they are paying for the reclaimed water service. They may ask you who is paying for the test.

Another significant difference between the two programs is that the residential irrigation program starts with a letter that explains the opt-out procedure. The reclaimed procedure is different. Because there is no additional charge for the reclaimed area testing these customers are simply notified by email that we will be out there testing.

Vendor questions and customer issues should be directed to Dave McKee mckewd2@jea.com or (904) 665-4336.