

Who can Repair Backflow Assemblies Now? (OHA is Oregon Health Authority, a state agency)

- Landscapers with the proper phase of professional license can install, repair, or replace assemblies with the additional requirement of certification through OHA as a Backflow Assembly Tester.
- Employees can repair assemblies on their employer's property.
- Homeowners without any training or certification can repair or replace their own assemblies.
- Anyone can repair or replace assemblies that are protecting stand-alone fire systems or stand alone irrigation systems.
- Plumbers

Who Can Test Backflow Assemblies?

Only individuals that have completed the initial ***OHA-approved Backflow Assembly Tester training course*** can test assemblies. OHA approves of 4 training agencies: Backflow Management Inc; Clackamas Community College; Eugene Water and Electric Board; and Local 290 Plumbers Union. All training agencies follow the same curriculum and use the same version of testing procedures derived from the University of S. California's Hydraulic Research Lab and as required by Oregon Administrative Rules under the Drinking Program at OHA. This course is not taught to plumber apprentices – it is an optional class offered for code-related credits that plumbers can use to renew their licenses. Not all plumbers are qualified to test assemblies.

Only OHA-certified testers are required to successfully complete 5 hours of training, pass a written exam and pass a hands-on demonstration of the test procedures that will include failures that must be diagnosed to ***renew their certification every 2 years***. Plumbers are exempt from the requirement to obtain continuing education since 2006.

OHA-certified testers that test for a fee must obtain ***Contractor Board license, insurance and bond*** equivalent to what is required of a plumber conducting their business.

History and the Problem

Testers were allowed to perform repairs up into the 1990's until an interpretation determined this was plumbers work. Since ***all plumbers are not testers***, when they are called by a consumer to do a repair, the plumber must then call back the tester to perform a final test. You can imagine how this affects the ***time*** it takes to get an assembly repaired, the ***expense and confusion*** to the consumer who does not understand the importance of this mechanical apparatus in their lawn that protects their health and the health of the public water supply.

Whose Jurisdiction is this?

Testers must provide a copy of a test report for each assembly tested to ***the serving water system***. The water system is responsible under state health rules to have a backflow program that identifies what types of locations require assemblies. Assemblies under OHA rules must be tested at least annually. Plumbing code also has fixture protection requirements that may require assemblies but once it is installed they no longer require testing. The responsibility to oversee a testing program is squarely on the water supplier. They are ***required to submit an annual summary report to OHA*** that details how many assemblies are in their system, how many were added, tested, failed and repaired. ***Repairs do not require a permit or inspection from BCD. Repairs are only reported by the tester to the water system.***

Repairs are as simple as changing a washer or flushing and any homeowner could perform a repair. **This is about protecting public health and consumer's** by allowing backflow assembly testers to perform only in-line flushing, cleaning and replacement of internal components as soon as a failure is diagnosed.

Respectfully, Kate Mattimore, Trustee at-large, OBTA