

TOWN OF IPSWICH UTILITIES DEPARTMENT



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DRINKING WATER ADVISORY: CONTAMINATION FROM CROSS-CONNECTIONS

Cross-connections that contaminate drinking water distribution lines are a major concern. A cross-connection is formed at any point where a drinking water line connects to equipment (boilers), systems containing chemicals (air conditioning systems, fire sprinkler systems, irrigation systems), or water sources of questionable quality. Cross-connection contamination can occur when the pressure in the equipment or system is greater than the pressure inside the drinking water line (backpressure). Contamination can also occur when the pressure in the drinking water line drops due to fairly routine occurrences (main breaks, heavy water demand) causing contaminants to be sucked out from the equipment and into the drinking water line (backsiphonage).

Outside water taps and garden hoses tend to be the most common sources of cross-connection contamination at home. The garden hose creates a hazard when submerged in a swimming pool or when attached to a chemical sprayer for weed killing. Fertilizers, cesspools, or garden chemicals may contaminate garden hoses that are left lying on the ground. Improperly installed valves on your toilet could also be a source of cross-connection contamination.

Community water supplies are continuously jeopardized by cross-connections unless appropriate valves, known as backflow prevention devices, are installed and maintained. We have surveyed industrial, commercial, and institutional facilities in the service area to make sure that potential cross-connections are identified and eliminated or protected by a backflow preventer. We also inspect and test each backflow preventer to make sure that it is providing maximum protection.

For more information, review the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's *Cross-Connection Control Manual* (EPA 816-R-03-002). You can also call the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at (800) 426-4791.

If you have any questions regarding this advisory, please call the Ipswich Water Department at (978) 356-6635.

Public Water Supplier ID # 3144000