

# Backflow Prevention

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Where is this taken place?**

We are actively checking for compliance on backflow devices in the Lower Umatilla Basin Ground Water Management Area (LUBGWMA) as the elevated nitrate levels are a health concern for the community, especially those dependent on well water. Additionally, the Governor's office has directed state agencies to reduce nitrate contamination in the region's groundwater.

### **What is being asked?**

OWRD is requiring groundwater controls (also referred to as chem checks, backflow or back-siphoning devices) to be installed on all irrigation systems that utilize chemicals and/or fertilizers. These devices help ensure that contaminants do not flow into the aquifer through the irrigation system.

### **Who is required to comply?**

All those with chemigation or fertigation are required to install these devices. We are checking compliance among permitted groundwater right holders that may be chemigating or fertigating. Domestic wells do not fall under the same irrigation requirements overseen by OWRD. Municipal wells are not included in this effort as they fall under different reporting systems.

### **Why are we doing this?**

The unsafe nitrate contamination is a serious health concern for the community and the Department is actively checking for compliance and enforcing when there is non-compliance with this rule. It is the tool we can utilize to help reduce point source contamination and work towards improving the resource.

### **When will this begin?**

Irrigators in the LUBGWMA will be required to have these installed prior to using fertigation or chemigation. Inspections and regulation will begin in the Spring of 2025.

## Frequently Asked Questions Continued

### **Do you have to install a backflow device if you are not using fertilizers or chemicals?**

No, these are only required if fertilizers or chemicals are being applied through your irrigation system.

### **Where does this authority come from?**

These devices are required under the Oregon Administrative Rules:

#### OAR 690-215- 0017 (4)

Back-siphon prevention devices shall be installed on any irrigation system connected to a groundwater source when chemicals or fertilizers are applied through the system

#### OAR 690-215-0005:

The landowner is ultimately responsible for the maintenance and use of the water supply well

### **What if I do not have a “common” system or the elevation/ distance serves as my backflow?**

If there is uncertainty in the compliance of your system, please ask for assistance and/or schedule a site inspection prior to purchase or use with fertilizers/chemicals. Additionally, you can reference the rules outlined in OAR 690-215-0017 to confirm your system meets the requirements.

### **Is there funding/reimbursement for irrigators/farmers?**

No, we do not have funding or reimbursement for these devices.

### **Where can I purchase these items?**

Backflow devices can be purchased locally through irrigation supply companies and/or online. Please ensure that your system meets the requirements prior to purchasing and installation. There are handouts available, information on our website and if in doubt please reach out for consultation.

### **How much do they cost?**

There are many factors that may impact the price of a device, but generally the device costs between \$400 - \$1200