
Georgia Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester Certification Program (GBPAT)



GEORGIA
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DIVISION

**WATERSHED PROTECTION BRANCH
DRINKING WATER PROGRAM**

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Background

The State of Georgia requires all community drinking water systems with at least 10,000 connections to have a cross-connection control program in place, but smaller water systems may also be required to have cross-connection control programs depending on special circumstances. Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) recommends all water systems have a cross-connection control program to protect drinking water distribution systems.

The following Georgia Rules for Drinking Water are applicable to cross-connection program(s) and backflow prevention assembly testing.

Georgia Rules for Drinking Water 391-3-5-.13 (4)

A water supplier shall, when requested by the Division, develop a control program for the elimination and prevention of all cross-connections. A written plan for the program shall be submitted to the Division for review and approval within two (2) years or less in accordance with a written request by the Division. When the plan is approved, the owner shall implement the program immediately.”

Georgia Rules for Drinking Water 391-3-5-.13 (6)

The supplier shall require that all backflow prevention assemblies installed pursuant to this section be field tested following installation, repair, or relocation and at least annually thereafter.”

Georgia Rules for Drinking Water 391-3-5-.13 (7)

After October 1, 2004, all required field testing shall be performed by persons who are certified in the testing of backflow prevention assemblies by the Georgia Statewide Backflow Prevention Assembly Certification Program, as approved by the Division, the American Backflow Prevention Association (ABPA), the American Society of Sanitary Engineers (ASSE) or the University of Florida TREEO Center.”

The requirement for backflow operator/tester certification is not codified in the Georgia Safe Drinking Water Act OCGA-12-5-170. Hence, the Georgia Secretary of State Professional Licensing Board which regulates other Drinking Water Professionals (Operators, Lab Analysts, and distribution system operators) does not administer the backflow prevention assembly certification program. Accordingly, Georgia EPD has contracted with Georgia Association of Water Professionals (GAWP) to administer a certification program for Georgia Backflow Prevention Assembly Testers (GBPAT) on behalf of Georgia EPD utilizing exams provided by the Association of Boards of Certification (ABC).

This document provides the requirements to become a certified backflow prevention assembly tester in Georgia and basic guidelines under which GAWP or any other contractor chosen by Georgia EPD should follow in administering the program on behalf of Georgia EPD.

Chapter 1

Requirements for Backflow Assembly Tester Certification

1.1 Education and General Requirements

- 1.11 An education level of a high school diploma, GED or equivalent is required for this certification.
- 1.12 Be able to carry out all duties and responsibilities associated with being a backflow prevention assembly tester.
- 1.13 Have reached the proper age requirements as needed in the jurisdiction where working.

1.2 Experience Requirement

Georgia EPD requires that all certified backflow assembly testers must have at least six (6) months experience in plumbing or distribution of drinking water. Applicants will be required to provide contact information of a person (preferably a current or past supervisor) that can verify required experience.

1.3 Prerequisite Training

- 1.31 All applicants seeking the certification must take the 32-hour BPAT Certification Class from one of the GAWP-approved training providers. Georgia Water & Wastewater Institute (GWWI) is the official GAWP training provider for this course.
- 1.32 Prerequisite training **does not expire** and does not need to be retaken.
- 1.33 Applicants will be required to pass a hands-on proctored exam to obtain a training certificate. The hands-on performance evaluation requires the student to properly perform the USC 10th edition test procedure on the Reduced Pressure Principle Assembly, Double Check Valve Assembly, and the Pressure Vacuum Breaker Assembly.
- 1.34 All approved training programs must follow the testing procedures of the Manual of Cross-Connection Control (10th Edition) or the most recent edition from the University of Southern California (USC) Foundation for Cross-Connection Control and Hydraulic Research. GAWP will provide the standardized hands-on proctored exam forms to be used during administration of those exams. Documentation

proving passing of hands-on proctored exams is to be retained by the trainer (and trainee) for a period of at least five (5) years.

1.35 Georgia also accepts equivalent training and/or certifications from three programs listed below. All individuals seeking a Georgia BPAT certification must pass the Georgia exam.

- American Society of Sanitary Engineering (ASSE), (404) 696-7121
<http://www.asse-plumbing.org/schools.asp>
- American Backflow Prevention Association (ABPA), (877) 227-2127
www.abpa.org
- University of Florida Center for Training, Research and Education for Environmental Occupations (TREEO), (352) 392-9570
www.treeo.ufl.edu

1.4 Backflow Prevention Assembly Testers Certification Exam

1.41 Applicants are not permitted to take the exam before completion of the required GAWP-approved 32-hour course. GAWP has a contract with the Association of Boards of Certification (ABC) to administer a nationally recognized BPAT exam. The exam provided by the Association of Boards of Certification consists of 100 questions, and the candidate must score a minimum of 70% to pass.

1.42 Applicants that do not pass the exam will have to wait 30 days before retaking the exam.

1.43 Veteran's points are awarded in alignment with other water operator certification programs overseen by the Georgia Secretary of State Licensing Board.

1.5 GBPAT Certification

Upon completing the experience requirement and successful passing of the exam, the applicant is eligible to apply for GBPAT Certification on the GAWP website.

1.6 Reciprocity or Endorsement

Georgia EPD does not grant reciprocity to backflow certified testers from other programs or organizations with the exception of ASSE, ABPA, and TREEO. Applicants that can prove possession of an active or lapsed backflow certification with one of these programs and wish to become certified as a Georgia Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester must take the Georgia BPAT exam. Training and/or certification must be validated and approved by GAWP before taking the exam. The individual must pass the Georgia BPAT exam and then apply for certification.

Chapter 2

Requirement for Renewal of Certification

2.1 Validity of the Certification

The Certification for Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester is valid for three (3) years from the date of issuance.

2.2 Recertification

2.21 It is the responsibility of the tester to apply for recertification.

2.22 Each Certified Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester is required to obtain six (6) contact hours of backflow continuing education courses approved by GAWP during the 3 years the certification is active.

2.23 Continuing education training certificates must include course name, course date, course length, GBPAT course approval number and name of trainer.

2.3 Renewal Process

2.3.1 On-Time Renewals (Certification has not expired)

- a. To renew the certificate, the certificate holder must submit the renewal request along with the renewal fee and proof of completion of six (6) contact hours of continuing education related to backflow.
- b. The renewal request, proof of continuing education and applicable fees must be received by GAWP no later than the expiration date.
- c. Completion of the Code of Ethics form (from the GAWP website) is required with each renewal.

2.3.2 Late Renewals (Certification expired)

- a. A certificate holder that fails to renew the certificate before the expiration date, will have 90 days of grace period to submit the renewal request along with proof of six (6) contact hours of continuing education specific to backflow. A late fee will be added to the renewal cost.
- b. During this 90-day grace period the certification will **NOT** be active, and the certificate holder **must cease** from testing backflow assemblies until the individual has received the new certificate.

- c. Completion of the Code of Ethics form (from the GAWP website) is required with each renewal.

2.4 Failure to Renew in Timely Manner

If the certificate is not renewed by the end of the 90-day grace period, then the certificate will be revoked. A person whose certification is revoked is required to retake the certification exam to get recertified.

2.5 Renewal of a Revoked Certification

A revoked Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester Certification may be renewed after the penalty period has expired with permission from Georgia EPD. The individual will be required to pass the certification exam and then may reapply for a certification.

Chapter 3

Noncompliance and Disciplinary Procedures

GA EPD will be responsible for all disciplinary and non-compliance issues.

3.1 Approved Tester Lists

The first line of defense against tester non-compliance will be that all water systems required to have Cross-Connection Control programs shall maintain an approved list of testers allowed to test in their jurisdiction.

3.2 Alleged Fraudulent Tester Activities

GAWP shall provide a method to report and obtain information about alleged fraudulent testing activities and provide a database record of these reports. Water systems are responsible for providing evidence to be used during the revocation process and may need to participate in the process with Georgia EPD.

3.3 GBPAT Certification Revocation

A GBPAT certification is subject to disciplinary action such as a fine, reprimand, consent order, suspension for a period of one year or revocation of the license upon submission of conclusive evidence of fraud, deceit, gross negligence or misconduct in the performance of their duties as a tester.

3.4 GBPAT Certification Revocation Appeal Process

A person may appeal a revocation, but appeal must be submitted in writing to Georgia EPD within fifteen (15) days of the revocation of the certificate. The applicant shall state the reason and all facts regarding the appeal. Georgia EPD shall make an inquiry of the appeal in a timely manner and give an answer in writing. A further written appeal may be made to the Georgia EPD Director. The Georgia EPD Director's decision shall be final.

Chapter 4

Guidelines for Program Administrator

EPD's contracted certification program administrator, GAWP, will be responsible for maintaining a database of all certified testers in Georgia, scheduling the classes, assigning proctors, collecting fees, and for providing communication regarding the tests and certification process on behalf of EPD.

4.1 Specific Responsibilities

It is understood that GAWP will perform the following tasks to administer the Georgia Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester Certification Program on behalf of Georgia EPD, and at no cost to Georgia EPD. The tasks include training, education, assistance, program administration (procedures and communication) and other implementation tasks needed by Georgia EPD. Georgia EPD remains the enforcement body for the certification program.

1. GAWP will contract with Association of Boards of Certification (ABC) to prepare, maintain and administer a Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester Exam and Needs-to-Know Criteria for the Georgia program.
2. GAWP will provide a prerequisite 32-hour Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester (BPAT) Certification training class that meets the standards set forth in the following Cross-Connection Control (Backflow Prevention) reference materials: Resource manuals are periodically updated; the most current edition will be used.
 - Manual of Cross-Connection Control (10th Edition), Foundation for Cross-Connection Control and Hydraulic Research, University of Southern California;
 - Recommended Practice for Backflow Prevention and Cross-Connection Control, American Water Works Association Manual M14; and
 - Cross-Connection Control Manual, Environmental Protection Agency EPA816-R-03-002.
3. The 32-hour BPAT Certification Training class shall include a hands-on proctored exam on these three (3) backflow devices: Reduced Pressure Zone, Double Check, and Pressure Vacuum Breaker. All approved trainers shall be responsible for providing proctors for their classes. The proctor shall meet the qualification required in Section 5.1 of this guidance document. GAWP will provide standard proctoring worksheets to all approved trainers so that proctoring is done in a consistent manner throughout the program.

4. GAWP will maintain a lab of permanently mounted backflow devices of all three types for the purposes of hands-on training and exams. GAWP will maintain a trailer equipped with all three types of backflow devices to be used at class locations within the state of Georgia.
5. GAWP will formally approve third-party trainers to provide the prerequisite 32-hour BPAT Certification training class including approval of hands-on laboratories to be used during the training in a similar manner to the GA Secretary of State's approved trainer process for drinking water. Approval will also include an in-person audit by GAWP of the training (trainers and materials). Approvals will be for a period of three (3) years. Approval numbers will be issued to approved trainers and must be included on all training certificates awarded to students.
6. GAWP will provide several continuing education training classes so that certified testers can maintain their certifications.
7. GAWP will provide live online training when necessary (such as during the COVID-19 pandemic).
8. GAWP will provide services to all water systems in the State of Georgia required to have a Cross-Connection Control Program. Services will include:
 - a. Communication of information pertinent to Cross-Connection Control in Georgia;
 - b. Maintain a database of all Cross-Connection Control program administrators for communication purposes;
 - c. Communication of training class schedules and opportunities for continuing education;
 - d. Assistance in setting up a new Cross-Connection Control program;
 - e. Training classes specific to operation of a water purveyor Cross-Connection Control program; and
 - f. Certified Tester searchable database of all current Georgia BPAT licensees.
9. GAWP will provide email, phone, and website services for communication with Backflow Prevention Assembly Testers. Website functionality will include:
 - a. An overview of the program including Georgia EPD regulations on Cross-Connection Control;
 - b. How to become a Certified Backflow Assembly Tester;
 - c. How to maintain your BPAT license;
 - d. Approved training providers;
 - e. Reciprocity/endorsement information;
 - f. Backflow exam information and registration;
 - g. Certification application (including Code of Ethics); and
 - h. Answers to frequently asked questions.
10. GAWP will provide a form for reporting alleged fraudulent testing and forward those reports to Georgia EPD.

11. GAWP will provide a report of the training and testing activities performed each quarter.
12. EPD will hold periodic meetings to gather feedback from stakeholders and seek suggestions to improve and strengthen the program. GAWP will assist EPD in sending out meeting notices to all Georgia BPAT licensees.

Chapter 5

Guidelines for Proctoring Hands-on Examinations

This chapter lays out the basic requirements and expectations from individual(s) that will proctor the hands-on portion of the backflow assembly testing exam. An approved trainer that has taught the classroom portion of the class can also proctor the hands-on portion of the class provided that they follow the basic guidelines in this chapter.

5.1 Proctor Qualifications

1. The person(s) proctoring the hands-on portion of the class must have been a certified backflow tester for at least 2 years.
2. The proctor must have a current valid certification from GBPAT or from one of the other three approved programs (ASSE, ABPA, and TREEO).

5.2 Proctor's Code of Conduct

1. The Proctor will not be allowed to evaluate coworkers, friends or family members. The Proctor is expected to self-recuse when there is an apparent conflict of interest.
2. The Proctor shall refrain from any direct or indirect assistance during the hands-on portion of the class.

5.3 Performance Exam Expectation

1. Class size is limited by the number of device testing stations available. There should be a maximum of 2 students per testing station.
2. At the beginning of the hands-on examination, the proctor shall provide the test examination form provided by GAWP. These forms may be periodically updated as needed by GAWP. No other forms are allowed as a substitute.
3. Prior to the hands-on examination, the Proctor will review the form and explain the testing expectations with each student taking the hands-on exam.
4. No strict time limit is set to complete the hands-on examination, but a general guideline would limit the time required to complete the test to 45 minutes. This is at the discretion of the proctor. More time may be allowed, providing that the individual being tested is making active progress.

5. The Proctor may simulate a problem with each backflow device being tested. Simulation may be accomplished by the removal of internal components (i.e. springs, check valves, etc.) or by external bypasses attached to the assembly.
6. The Proctor shall be present at all times while the students are taking the exam and observe each student to assure that the exam standards are stringently applied. In particular, no collaboration or assistance must occur during the testing.
7. The Proctor must not interrupt the individual being tested, even if an error is being made by the individual. Only after the individual has completed the testing of a device shall the Proctor notify the applicant that an error was made and allow a second attempt to correctly test the device. The Proctor should state, ‘you have erred, and will be allowed one more attempt.’ If the individual performs the procedure properly during the first or second attempt, then the individual shall be allowed to proceed with the test; if not, the proctor will terminate the hands-on testing, inform the individual that they failed the exam, and explain the error(s)

5.4 Pass/Fail Criteria

1. The tested individual shall sign their completion of the hands-on examination by submitting the Performance Examination Test Form to the Proctor.
2. The Proctor shall verify the field test procedure was performed correctly, the field test data is recorded accurately, and the test form represents the condition of the assembly being tested. The applicant must correctly test all three of the aforementioned backflow protection devices to pass the hands-on exam
3. At the completion of the hands-on examination, the Proctor shall verify that all aspects of the hands-on test have been successfully completed. The Proctor shall grade the applicant's test procedure on the evaluation form prepared by GAWP and document the results on the form. The Proctor shall then inform the individual that they have passed or failed. The form will be saved as a part of the individual’s record for five years and should be made available during any audit of the program.