

## **BACKFLOW PREVENTION ASSEMBLY TESTER CERTIFICATION HISTORY**

The Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester is needed by administrative authorities around the country to assure the backflow prevention assemblies installed continue to protect the drinking water. The ABPA's Training and Education Committee has completed the task of establishing the criteria for what a Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester needs to know and there are some dramatic changes: Once a person has been trained, a testing protocol had to be developed to verify the student's knowledge against this need to know criteria. The student must also be able to demonstrate their ability to test and troubleshoot the different types of backflow prevention assemblies.

### **THE PAST**

ABPA is an organization dedicated to providing its members with the appropriate tools to implement and run an effective cross connection control program. One of the tools that was requested almost ten years ago was a Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester written examination that a local instructor could administer to a student to help evaluate their understanding of the basic principles that a tester needed to know. The test was developed and sold to instructors around the country who needed a written examination for their classes, however the written examination did not offer any type of certification. In 1990 questions began to arise about the many different tester course outlines the instructors around the country utilized and the ability of this single written examination to properly judge the students comprehension of the subject matter. The written examination needed to be changed to meet this need.

Before the examination could be properly modified there had to be consistency in training. The need to establish a course outline with a consistent core of information became necessary to assure that the many different instructors were teaching the same material. In 1992 the Committee completed the task of developing the Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester Course Outline. With the completed course outline a balanced examination commensurate with the course outline was developed to assure that the tester demonstrated their comprehension of the subject matter. The Committee further saw the need to assure that the written examination was secure and not passed around in an unauthorized fashion. The Committee developed a bank of questions to draw from so that different written examinations could be developed to assure confidentiality. All these modifications are done to reflect standard industry practices for written examinations.

### **THE PRESENT**

Many instructors around the country are currently utilizing the ABPA Tester Course Outline and also purchase the original ABPA written examination which is administered to their students. However, this process is not intended to certify the individual as a backflow prevention assembly tester. Many administrative authorities around the coun-

try have begun to express the need for a certification program that they could rely on to demonstrate the tester's understanding of the need to know requirements contained in the Tester Course Outline, and their ability to perform a field test. ABPA was asked to develop and administer such a certification program. In 1992 the ABPA Training and Education Committee was given the task to develop this program which incorporates a performance or hands on demonstration of the tester's ability to properly conduct a field test of a backflow prevention assembly. The Committee saw the need to develop the written and performance examination guidelines so that the examinations are complete in content and administered fairly.

With the Tester Course Outline, the written examination bank of questions, and the written and performance examination guidelines developed, the Committee was asked in 1993 to tie the whole package together and establish a National Voluntary Certification Program for the backflow prevention assembly tester. The Committee developed the set of Rules for the administration of the process to acquire an ABPA backflow assembly tester certification and presented the Certification Program to the ABPA Board of Directors on January 23, 1994, at which time it was unanimously approved and implementation began immediately.

#### DETAILS OF THE PROGRAM

The ABPA Voluntary Certification Program was drawn up on a consensus basis to assure it properly reflected the needs of administrative authorities throughout the country. The Committee was made up of a balance between instructors, water works officials, plumbing officials, and backflow professionals. The Committee started with the ABPA Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester Course Outline. In re-evaluating it they confirmed that it still presented the need to know criteria for a student who wishes to operate as a backflow prevention assembly tester. The six sections of the outline were evaluated and weighted by percentage. Existing industry practices suggested that 100 questions exam were standard for the written exam. A 100 question written examination was then constructed of questions using the same percentage as the course outline. Because of the many local code and regulation differences it is advised that the local administrative authority add enough local code and regulation questions to the ABPA's 100 questions to assure that the student understands the material. The Committee agreed that the written examination must be kept secure and not distributed to anyone. For the written examination to properly reflect the students understanding of the subject it is important that the student and the teacher not see the written examination before the exam it is administered. Existing practices suggest that some teachers would review the questions before administering the examination in the misguided desire to help the student pass the course. For the test to be valid, neither the teacher nor the applicant may be allowed to see the written examination before or after the test. To further assure the examination validity an ABPA appointed third party examination monitor or proctor shall be appointed to hand carry the written examinations into the test site and administer a closed book examination. The examination monitor will grade the examinations and return the examinations to ABPA. The applicant would be notified of their pass/fail status by the examination monitor. In this way, no copies of the test could be accidentally put in circulation to compromise the security of the written examination.

Once the applicant successfully passes the written examination the applicant would be required to take the ABPA performance examination. The closed book performance examination is designed to evaluate the applicant's ability to perform a field test on a reduced pressure principle backflow prevention assembly, a double check backflow prevention assembly, and a pressure vacuum breaker. In addition the applicant will be required to orally demonstrate their ability to diagnose and troubleshoot conditions that were not present in the actual assembly that the applicant performed their performance examination on. This performance examination would be administered by an ABPA appointed third party proctor, that is, someone other than the teacher or instructor. When the applicant passes both the written and performance examinations they would be issued an ABPA Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester Certificate which would be

valid for three years from the date of issuance. After three years the tester would have to re-certify by having to go through a written and performance examination in the same manner as the initial examination to demonstrate their continued understanding and ability to perform a field test. The ABPA tester certification is subject to revocation by the ABPA Board of Directors upon submission of conclusive evidence of fraud, deceit, gross negligence or misconduct in the performance of their duties as a tester. The ABPA Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester Certification Program is a voluntary program. ABPA developed this program at the direct request of its Members to meet their needs. It is up to the local administrative authority to recognize a certificate as valid in their area of jurisdiction.

## THE FUTURE

ABPA has appointed Mr. Ernie Havlina to act as the Administrator of this voluntary certification program. His duties include evaluation of tester applications, administering examinations, issuing certificates, and performing associated duties of the Backflow Assembly Tester Certification Program. Mr. Havlina is well known throughout the country and has almost 50 years experience in cross-connection control. He has experience as a cross connection control program administrator and a certification administrator. ABPA is extremely lucky to be able to get someone with his level of experience and expertise. Mr. Havlina was involved with the ABPA Training and Education Committee when the Rules were developed. He was not an official member of the Training and Education Committee but was invaluable in the drafting of the program Rules. As Administrator of the Program Mr. Havlina will be able to answer any administrative authority's questions on the ABPA Certification Program.

Enclosed are the Rules as adopted, for the review of all ABPA Members or interested parties. There will be an initial one-year time period from July 1, 1994 to July 1, 1995 when a backflow prevention assembly tester can apply for an ABPA Certificate without examination. The intent is to allow testers from a recognized certification program to acquire ABPA Certification without examination so that there is an easier transition for all testers in the first year of the Certification Program. The details of a recognized Certification Program are in section 9.2 of the Rules governing the certification of an ABPA Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester. The Certificate issued to a tester without exami-

nation will only be valid for a one-year period, at which time the tester will have to conform to the Rules of the Certification Program. In this first full year of the program Mr. Havlina will be assembling a list of local contacts to act as examination monitors and proctors. Proctors must comply with the established proctor requirements. If you would like to help assist the Program you can contact your ABPA Regional Director, or

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The ABPA Tester Certification Program will help the administrative authority to assure that individual's acting as backflow prevention assembly testers are receiving the proper training and can demonstrate their understanding of that training in a validated examination process. The value of the ABPA Certification to a tester is that they can possess a certificate which demonstrates their understanding of their basic need to know criteria and the ability to perform a field test of a backflow assembly.

It is the Training and Education Committees hope that we have been able to answer your questions on the new ABPA Tester Voluntary Certification Program. Testers who have any questions should contact their administrative authority regarding testing certification requirements in their local area. Administrative authorities interested in additional information should contact Mr. Havlina. ABPA is proud to present this latest benefit to the cross-connection control community.

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