Backflow Reduced Pressure Zone Assembly Q & A

1. Why does the Double Check assembly not protect against high hazard cross connections?
    a. **Limited Pressure Control**: Double Check assemblies only have two check valves in series with test cocks. They're designed to prevent backflow caused by back pressure or back siphonage, but they don't have a mechanism to prevent contamination under all failure conditions.
    b. **No Air Gap or Relief Valve**: Unlike RPZ (Reduced Pressure Zone) assemblies, Double Check assemblies don't include a pressure differential relief valve between the check valves. This means that if both check valves fail simultaneously, there's no third layer of protection to prevent contamination of the potable water supply.
    c. **Failure Detection**: If a check valve in a DC assembly fails, there's no visual indication of the failure. The device will continue to operate without any outward sign of malfunction, potentially allowing contamination.
    d. **High Hazard Definition**: "High hazard" refers to situations where contamination could cause illness or death if ingested. Irrigation systems are classified as high hazard because they can introduce fertilizers, pesticides, animal waste, or other harmful substances back into the drinking water supply.
    e. **Regulatory Recognition**: Plumbing codes and water quality regulations specifically require RPZ assemblies for high hazard applications because they provide the level of protection necessary for these situations.

2. Why can’t the RPZ be installed in a crawl space?
    a. **Installation Height Requirement**: Plumbing codes require RPZs to be installed at least 12 inches above ground or floor level
    b. **Flooding Risk**: Crawl spaces can flood, installing them in a crawl space could lead to backflow if the device is submerged under water.

3. Will the RPZ freeze if installed outside?
    a. Proper winterization will prevent the assembly from freezing.

4. Why did I not receive a letter regarding the RPZ requirements?
    a. You most likely have an RPZ assembly installed on your irrigation system. You can verify the type of device you have installed on your most recent backflow test.

5. If my house was built to code, why is my current device not “grandfathered” in?
    a. Backflow prevention is considered critical infrastructure for protecting the entire public water supply. When new standards are established for protecting against contamination, they typically apply to all connections regardless of when they were installed.

6. How can I find a company that can install the new device?
    a. Most plumbing companies and sprinkler/irrigation companies will install the RPZ. We have also compiled a list of companies that have been recommended by other shareholders and our local Sprinkler Supply Company. This list can be found here: https://www.summitwater.us/cross-connection/. Please make sure to get multiple quotes, pricing will vary depending on your current situation.

7. Why did Summit Water just start annual backflow testing?
    a. The backflow testing requirement has been in place since our cross-connection program was implemented. This information was noted on the water service agreement, our website, and on the water quality reports. We have recently been required to educate our shareholders and to ensure that the testing is being conducted.

8. If I do not use my irrigation system, do I have to update my device?
    a. If you do not use your irrigation system and would like to be removed from this requirement, you can cut and cap your irrigation system. This will need to be inspected by Summit Water once completed.

9. Does my fire suppression system have to be updated with an RPZ?
    a. No, this is because standard fire sprinkler systems (those without antifreeze, foam, or other chemical additives) are generally classified as "low hazard" or "moderate hazard" connections.

10. Will I have to continue annual backflow testing on the RPZ?
    a. Yes, you will need to continue with annual backflow testing for your new RPZ assembly. Annual testing is a standard requirement for all backflow prevention assemblies regardless of type. Testing ensures the device is functioning properly to protect the public water supply. Check valves are sealing properly, and the relief valve is operating as designed. And no components have been damaged or deteriorated.