

## 1. - BACKFLOW AT AN AGRICULTURAL PREMISES

DATE OF BACKFLOW INCIDENT: June 1983

LOCATION OF BACKFLOW INCIDENT: Woodsboro, Maryland

SOURCE(S) OF INFORMATION:

- Pacific Northwest Section of the American Water Works Association, Summary of Backflow Incidents, Fourth Edition, 1995
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Cross-Connection Control Manual, 1989
- Watts Industries, Inc.; Watts Regulator News/Stop Backflow

### CASE HISTORY

In June 1983, "yellow gushy stuff" poured from some faucets in the Town of Woodsboro, Maryland. Town personnel notified the County Health Department and the State Water Supply Division. The State dispatched personnel to take water samples for analysis and placed a ban on drinking the Town's water. Firefighters warned residents not to use the water for drinking, cooking, bathing, or any other purpose except flushing toilets. The Town began flushing its water system. An investigation revealed that the powerful agricultural herbicide Paraquat had backflowed into the Town's water system.

Someone left open a gate valve between an agricultural herbicide holding tank and the Town's water system and, thus, created a cross-connection. Coincidentally, water pressure in the Town temporarily decreased due to failure of a pump in the Town's water system. The herbicide Paraquat was backsiphoned into the Town's water system. Upon restoration of pressure in the Town's water system, Paraquat flowed throughout much of the Town's water system.

Fortunately, this incident did not cause any serious illness or death. The incident did, however, create an expensive burden on the Town. Tanker trucks were used temporarily to provide potable water, and the Town flushed and sampled its water system extensively.