

# 715.1

## Exception for Backwater Valve Installations

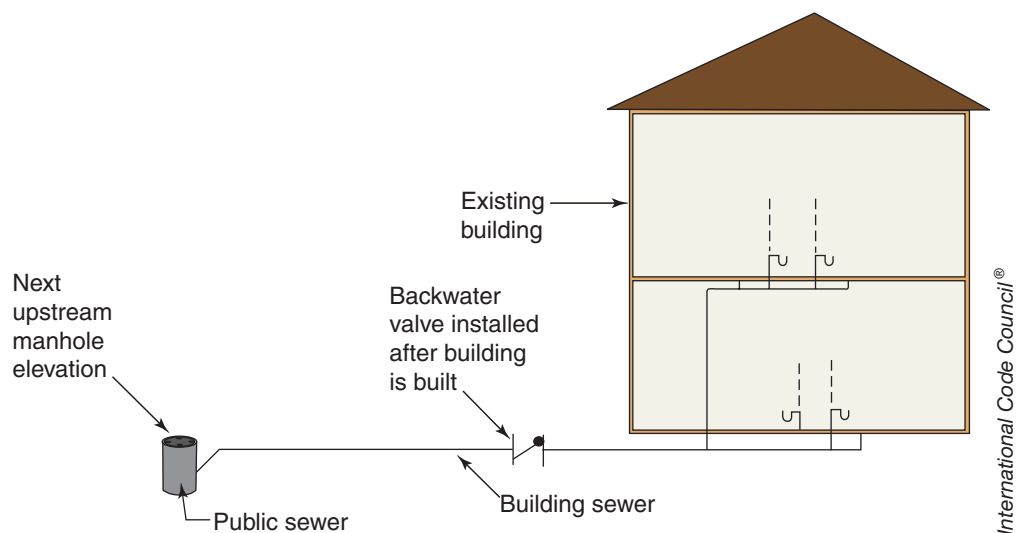
**CHANGE TYPE:** Modification

**CHANGE SUMMARY:** Retrofit of a backwater valve in accordance with the code in an existing building is nearly impossible without the new exception.

**2015 CODE: 715.1 Sewage Backflow.** Where plumbing fixtures are installed on a floor with a finished floor elevation below the elevation of the manhole cover of the next upstream manhole in the public sewer, such fixtures shall be protected by a backwater valve installed in the building drain, or horizontal branch serving such fixtures. Plumbing fixtures installed on a floor with a finished floor elevation above the elevation of the manhole cover of the next upstream manhole in the public sewer shall not discharge through a backwater valve.

**Exception:** In existing buildings, fixtures above the elevation of the manhole cover of the next upstream manhole in the public sewer shall not be prohibited from discharging through a backwater valve.

**CHANGE SIGNIFICANCE:** A new exception specifically addresses a common problem encountered with installation of a backwater valve for an existing building. Existing buildings built before the code required backwater valves for fixtures on floor levels below the elevation of the next upstream manhole cover are at risk for sewage backflows caused by public sewer problems. In some cases, many years will pass without the public sewer creating a fixture overflow in an older building. As more building sewer connections are made to the public sewer, and as storm water infiltration increases as the public sewer ages, surcharging and clogs in the public sewer can develop. Usually, a building owner will experience only one sewage overflow in the building before he or she consults with a plumbing contractor to provide a solution to protect against these sometimes catastrophic events.



Exception allows this backwater valve arrangement only for existing buildings

However, installation of a backwater valve after a building is built presents the problem of how to separate the drainage flow from fixtures on floors below the next upstream manhole cover from the fixtures on floors above the next upstream manhole cover. The drainage piping within the building is so integral to the construction of the building that separation of the drainage flows for installation of backwater valve in accordance with the code is often impossible. This exception allows, for existing buildings only, installation of a backwater valve for all fixtures in a building, even if those fixtures are on a floor above the next upstream manhole cover elevation. A building owner should have the ability to protect his or her property from public sewer surcharging that could cause an overflow in the building. Without a backwater valve installed in these situations, multiple overflow events and property damage could continue to occur unabated.



This excerpt is taken from ***Significant Changes to the International Plumbing/Mechanical/Fuel Gas Codes, 2015 Edition***.

Significant Changes publications take you directly to the most important changes that impact projects. Key changes are identified then followed by in-depth discussion of how the change affects real-world application. Photos, tables and illustrations are included to further clarify application. Available for the IBC, IRC, IFC and IPC/IMC/IFGC, the Significant Changes publications are very useful training and review tools for transitioning to a new code edition.