

Code of Practice on Leakage for Domestic Customers

This leaflet sets out how we're able to help with the cost of replacing or repairing your underground private supply pipe if you have a leak.

If you pay metered charges this leaflet also tells you what we'll do if you have a large bill because of the leak.

You'll find a list of our other Codes of Practice on the back of this leaflet. You can download them from our website, southwestwater.co.uk/cop, or call us on 0344 346 2020 for a free copy.

If your property is used for both domestic and commercial purposes, the sections relating to replacement and repair of supply pipes apply to you.

However, the terms on which we may grant you a leak allowance against your bill will depend on whether the domestic use of your property is the primary use of the property and whether the leak is on a section of pipe that serves the domestic part of your property.

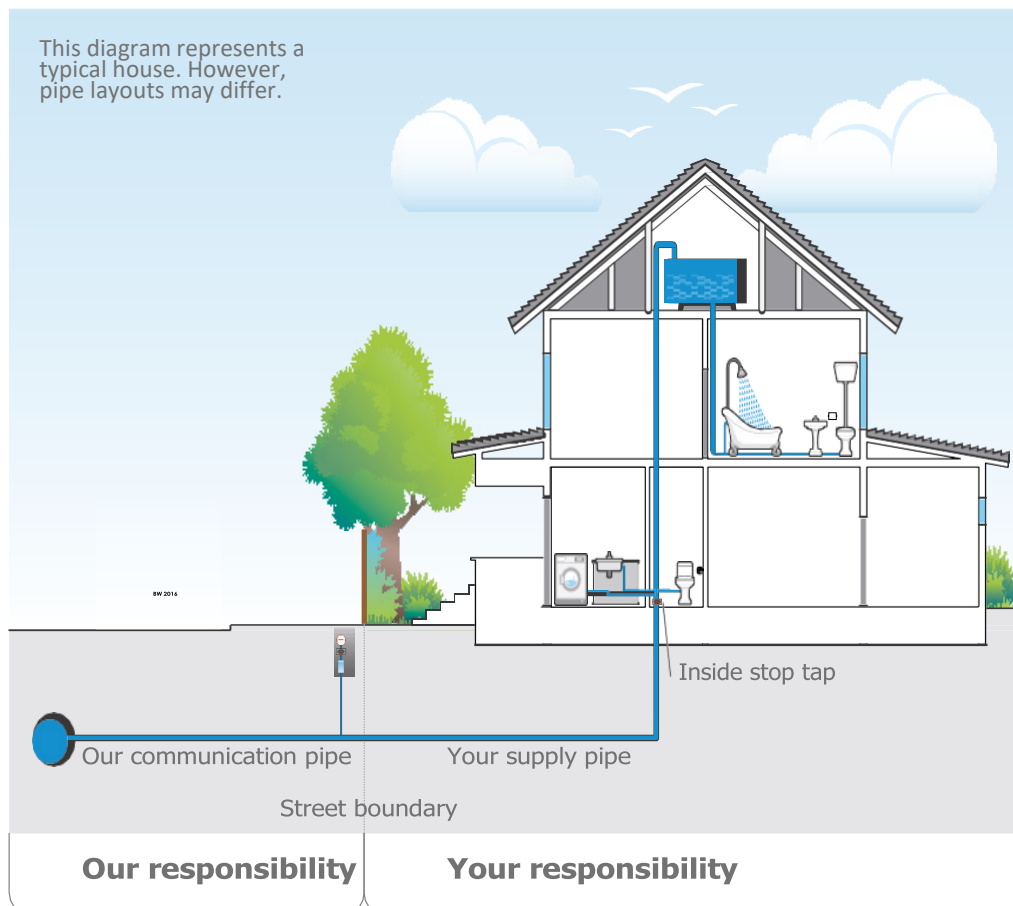
Responsibility for pipework

As a customer, it's very important for you to be aware that it's your responsibility to maintain the supply pipe which delivers water into your home.

The diagram on the next page shows which pipes are generally your responsibility and which are our responsibility.

If you live in a house that's some distance from our water main, it's likely you'll have a very long supply pipe. Please remember, you're responsible for the entire length of the supply pipe from your house to the boundary of the street in which our main is laid (or to the main itself if our main isn't laid in the street), even though it may pass through other people's property.

The Service pipe	The communication pipe	The supply pipe
Properties are connected to our water mains by a service pipe. The ownership of the service pipe is divided into two parts, the communication pipe and the supply pipe.	This part of the water service pipe is South West Water's responsibility and runs from our water main to the boundary of the street in which a water main is laid. We are responsible for looking after and maintaining this.	This part of the water service pipe is the homeowner's responsibility. It extends from the boundary of the street in which a water main is laid and connects with the internal stop tap usually found under the kitchen sink.



Your home may also share its supply pipe with one or more neighbouring properties. In this case you'll have joint responsibility with the other property owners for the section or sections of pipe which provide water to your property and those of your neighbours, and sole responsibility for the section of pipe that provides water only to your own property.

If you need help confirming responsibility for your supply pipe, please see the fact sheets on our website at southwestwater.co.uk/pipes.

Understanding your water usage

There could be a number of reasons why you're using more water than you expect. To help you, we've produced a leaflet called [Understanding Your Water Usage](#) which will take you through eight simple steps to identify the possible reasons for your high usage.

It gives clear guidance on what to do if you have a leak either in your pipework or on one of your internal appliances. You can download it from our website or call our Services Helpline on 0344 346 2020 for a free copy.

Leaks on your pipework

We have a duty to reduce leakage and promote the efficient use of water.

We work hard to reduce leakage from our pipes and to ensure we meet our targets set by Ofwat.

Water escaping from a leak is a loss of a costly and valuable resource, so if a leak is reported or detected on your pipework, we'll ask you to repair it.

If you don't repair a leak when asked you may not get an allowance on your bill for the water that's wasted, or a contribution towards the cost of the repair or replacement.

If you don't comply with our request, we can serve a legal notice requiring a repair to be carried out.

We're also able to carry out the repair ourselves and recover our costs from the person responsible for the pipe.

In cases where escaping water may cause damage or danger to people or property, we can turn off the supply until the repair is carried out.

We usually allow 30 days for a leak to be repaired, although in some circumstances we can issue a 10-day notice to have the leak repaired.

If you don't own your property, your landlord should be responsible for repairing the leak for you. If you're a tenant, it's your responsibility to pass on any information.

Some older supply pipes are in poor condition and it may be more practical and cost-effective to replace the pipe rather than repairing the leak, as it's quite likely that further leaks will occur.

Checks made when a water meter is installed for the first time

We know that a substantial amount of water escapes from unidentified leaks on customers' underground supply pipes. When we install a meter on an existing supply, we'll check to see whether your private supply pipe is leaking by confirming that the meter flow indicator isn't moving when you're not using any water in your home. This check may also indicate that you have a leak on your internal plumbing and you'll need to get a plumber to help you fix this.

If there's a leak on the underground pipe which is within the excavation we've made to install the meter, we'll repair it free of charge.

However, if additional excavation is required, you'll be responsible for repairing the leak yourself. We may make a contribution towards the cost of this repair.

If you don't repair it within 30 days, we'll charge you for all the water used and you may not qualify for a contribution towards the cost of the repair.

Position of your water meter

We'll determine the location of your meter in accordance with regulations set by the Government. We may install a meter either internally or externally near to the boundary of your property.

If you have particular physical needs that mean you can't check your meter reading when you need to because of its location, we'll register you on our Priority Services Register so that you can ask us to check the meter reading for you.

If this doesn't resolve your concerns about checking your meter reading, we'll consider moving the meter but only if:

- We can find a location that makes it more accessible for you to read;
- The alternative location is one which will allow the meter to measure all the water you use and only the water you use; and
- Significant alterations to your household fittings or plumbing aren't required.

If we agree to move a meter in these circumstances, we won't charge for moving it.

What will South West Water do to help if I have a leak?

If you have a leak on your internal plumbing you should check with your insurance company to see if you are covered for this and you will need to get a plumber to help you fix it because it's part of your house. We won't be able to help you fix an internal leak or help you with the cost of repairs, nor will you be entitled to a leak allowance.

If you have a leak on your private underground supply pipe, while we won't help you find and repair the leak, we may contribute towards your costs of having the leak fixed. We can provide you with a list of contractors who may be able to help you find and fix it (see "Financial help" on page 6 for details of conditions relating to subsidising the costs of replacement or repair).

Repair or replace?

A leak could be a sign that your private underground supply pipe is wearing out. Often repairing one leak will cause the pipe to leak somewhere else due to the disturbance to an already defective pipe, or other leaks will develop as the condition of the pipe deteriorates further.

Black alkathene plastic pipes and galvanised iron pipes are most at risk of multiple leaks once a leak occurs. It may well be better, safer and more cost-effective for you to replace the pipe rather than just repair the leak. This is why we'll make a much larger contribution to your costs if you replace the pipe rather than repair it. We'll only make one financial contribution – we won't provide a contribution towards renewal if we've previously made a contribution towards the cost of repair.

Financial help

Once your supply pipe has been replaced in its entirety, send us a copy of the invoice for the work, and provided it was done within 30 days of you becoming aware of the leak, we'll make a 'once only' discretionary contribution of up to £250 towards your costs.

If you only have a leak repaired or your supply pipe partially replaced, send us a copy of the invoice for the work. Our discretionary contribution will be up to £100 –provided that the work was carried out within 30 days of you becoming aware of the leak.

If your leak is on a section of joint supply pipe for which you and a number of neighbours are responsible, we'll make an appropriate contribution towards the costs of replacement or repair incurred by each of the paying householders. For example, if four of you have to pay a bill totalling £800 to have your supply pipe replaced, we'll pay £200 to each of you.

Please note: 'once only' means one contribution per customer, per property. So if you've received a contribution for a supply pipe repair or renewal at a previous property, you'll be entitled to another contribution if you move house and have a leak at your new property.

Leak allowances for customers paying metered charges

If you have a water meter, you're responsible for all of the water registered as used on the meter, even if your usage is higher than usual because of a leak on your supply pipe. Therefore, you'll be paying for water that's wasted by leakage from your pipework.

However, the first time you have a leak on your private underground supply pipe, we'll grant you an allowance for both the water and sewerage elements of your bill so that you don't pay any more than usual.

To qualify for an allowance you must stop the leak by repairing or replacing your supply pipe within 30 days of receiving a notice from us suggesting that you might have a leak or receiving a bill showing higher than normal water use (which should cause you to check for a leak).

We'll only backdate allowances over the last two scheduled meter readings. If a leak has been running for longer than this period, we'll only provide an allowance for the water lost during the last two meter reading periods. This includes restricting allowances for sewerage charges to the same timescales.

We won't grant an allowance where:

- a. water is escaping from pipework or fittings other than your underground supply pipe
- b. a leak is caused by negligence or wilful damage by you, your family or agents
- c. a bill or notice from us should have alerted you to the possibility that you have a leak and you failed to have it fixed within 30 days.

Subsequent leaks

If you have a second leak after we've granted you a leak allowance, we may grant you a further leak allowance; however this will be at our discretion. To qualify you'll need to explain how you've been checking for leakage regularly and show that you spotted the leak as early as you could and had it repaired quickly.

We won't give any customer more than two leak allowances for the same property – but if you move house and have a leak on the supply pipe at your new home, you'll be entitled to a leak allowance if the supply pipe at your new property has a leak and you have it repaired quickly.

We strongly recommend that you consider replacing your private supply pipe if it starts to leak and there's any indication that the pipework has become defective. This will help to avoid the possibility of getting a high bill in the future which you'll have to pay.

Adjustment of water supply charges

Where we agree to make a leak allowance, we'll adjust your water charges based on your normal consumption. Where there's no record of previous consumption, we'll take a meter reading after the leak has been repaired and base an allowance on the amount recorded. We won't ask you to pay until we've calculated your allowance.

If you need to apply for a leak allowance, please call our Services Helpline.

Adjustment of sewerage charges

If you pay sewerage charges and we adjust your water charges because of a leak, we may make a similar adjustment to your sewerage charges.

How to spot a leak

Water escaping from a leak on your private underground supply pipe may not be obvious above ground, but wet areas or patches of lush vegetation in your garden during dry spells could suggest a leak. If you have an external meter, it's important to keep a regular check on your meter readings to help you identify an underground leak at an early stage. We would recommend that you check your meter reading at least once a month.

A bill showing higher than normal consumption may also be an indication that you have a leak on your supply pipe. If you suspect that you might have a leak, you can check by noting the reading on all the dials on the meter; turning off all water-using appliances in your house for a couple of hours and checking the meter reading again. If the dials have moved, you probably have a leak. If you have internal water storage there may continue to be some inflow to the storage tank during this period. To check for this, take several readings during the period of the test; this may indicate an initial flow stopping when the storage tank is full.

To check if a leak is on your underground pipe and not inside your property, you should turn off your internal stopcock (usually located under the kitchen sink) and check the meter again. If the dials have moved again, or are moving while the stopcock is turned off, the leak is probably on your underground pipe.

If you believe your meter is recording consumption inaccurately, you may require us to test the accuracy of the meter supplying your property. However, we'll charge for this if the test shows that the meter is correctly recording consumption. For further details see our [Household Charges Scheme](#), available on our website or by calling our Services Helpline for a free copy.

Reporting a leaking supply pipe

If you need to report a leak on your supply pipe, please call our Services Helpline.

Reporting other leaks

We're very grateful to customers who report leaks from our water mains to us. You can report a leak on our website southwestwater.co.uk/report-a-leak or by calling our free leak reporting line on 0800 230 0561.

If you're not satisfied

Please let us know. If you believe that we haven't complied with this code of practice, you can let us know using the contact details on the back of this leaflet. Our [Complaints and Compliments](#) leaflet explains how we'll deal with your concern.

In the unlikely event that we're not able to resolve your complaint to your full satisfaction and our position has been reviewed by a senior South West Water manager, you can refer your concerns to the Consumer Council for Water (CCW) who'll investigate independently.

CCW is an independent statutory body which protects customers' interests and investigates complaints.

You can contact them at:

Telephone: 0300 034 2222

Relay UK (NGT) is also available

Address:

1st Floor

Victoria Square House,

Victoria Square,

Birmingham, B2 4AJ

Email: via form on website, ccwater.org.uk

Water Industry Redress Scheme (WATRS)

If your complaint remains unresolved after it has gone through all the stages of our complaints procedure and has been reviewed by CCW, you may be eligible to take your concerns to WATRS, the Water Industry Redress Scheme, which can provide an independent binding decision. Details on how and when to apply can be found at watsr.org or contact:

Telephone: 020 7520 3801

Address:

WATRS

International Dispute Resolution Centre

70 Fleet Street

London

EC4Y 1EU

Email: info@watsr.org

Contact us

Accounts Helpline: 0344 346 1010
8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat
Closed on Sundays and bank holidays

Services Helpline: 0344 346 2020
8am-6pm Mon-Fri
Emergencies only outside these times

There's lots of information and we can be contacted on our website
www.southwestwater.co.uk

Debt Helpline: 0800 083 0283
Water conservation: 0800 378937
Minicom: 0800 169 9965
You can contact us via Relay UK (NGT)

Address
South West Water,
PO Box 4762,
Worthing, BN11 9NT

We have Codes of Practice on:

- [Complaints and Compliments](#)
- [Our Customer Promise](#)
- [Leakage for Domestic Customers](#)
- [Our Water Supply Service](#)
- [Our Wastewater Service](#)
- [Payment and Debt Recovery](#)
- [Priority Services](#)

These codes of practice can be found on our website www.southwestwater.co.uk

We work hard to support customers in vulnerable circumstances and are proud to have received certification against the British Standard for Inclusive Service Provision.

