

Code of Practice on our Water Supply Services

In this leaflet we explain about our water supply services, how we supply you with your water, information on quality and pressure, and what to do if you have a problem with your water and who to contact.

A list of other Codes of Practice can be found on the back of this leaflet. You can download them from our website, southwestwater.co.uk/cop, or call us on 0344 346 1010 for a free copy.

Serving the South West

We are licensed by the Secretary of State for the Environment. The industry regulator, Ofwat ensures we operate in accordance with our licence conditions to supply water and wastewater services to Cornwall, Devon and small areas of Dorset and Somerset.

The resident population of the region is approximately 1.8 million and in the peak tourist months the number of people we serve increases to over two million.

We supply around 442 million litres of water each day through 15,525 kilometres of water mains to 800,000 homes and 70,000 businesses in the South West.



We are a closely regulated company and the drinking water we supply meets the latest Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations issued by the Secretary of State for the Environment.

The regulations are based on strict European guidelines and cover the chemical, microbiological and aesthetic quality of the water. In addition, we must make sure we manage our supply so that we can provide you with enough water for normal domestic purposes.

Our number one priority is making sure you have excellent quality drinking water 24 hours a day. Drinking water quality in our region is consistently of a very high standard and British water overall is considered to be among the best in the world.

Where does my water come from?

About 90% of the water we supply comes from rivers and reservoirs; the rest comes from underground sources. We treat water at 29 key water treatment works across the region.

The Environment Agency regulates the amount of water we can take from rivers and other inland waters. You can contact them at:

South West Office
Manley House
Kestrel Way
Exeter EX2 7LQ
Telephone: 03708 506 506
Minicom: 03702 422 549
Website: [gov.uk/environment-agency](https://www.gov.uk/environment-agency)
Email: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

We also work closely with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to ensure that the public water supply is maintained and the environment protected. You can contact them at:

Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR
Telephone: 03459 335 577
Website: [gov.uk/defra](https://www.gov.uk/defra)
Email: defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk

What do you do to ensure that my water is clean and safe to drink?

We ensure that all the water we supply for normal domestic purposes, which includes drinking, washing, cooking, central heating and sanitation, meets the high statutory standards.

We closely monitor and in many cases continually monitor the quality of the water from its source, as it passes through our treatment processes and distribution network, until it reaches your tap. We test thousands of samples taken from our treatment works, supply system and from our customers' taps.

The Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) provides independent reassurance that water supplies in England and Wales are safe. It ensures that our systems are adequately operated and maintained correctly and investigates any incidents which may occur. You can contact them at:

Area 7E, 9 Millbank
c/o Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR
Telephone: 0300 068 6400
Email: dwi.enquiries@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Can I see details of the water quality in my area?

Yes, we can provide you with details of the test results for your immediate area free of charge. If you request a copy of the results, we'll send you one within seven days of receiving your request. Please call us on 0344 346 1010.

Does water quality vary?

The quality of your drinking water shouldn't vary significantly. However, the taste, colour, and hardness (or softness) of your water may be affected by the source of your water (river, reservoirs, springs and boreholes), the treatment we apply to it, the condition of the pipe network we transport it through and the condition of the plumbing in your property.

Our water sources do change from time to time and because of this, or if you move from one area to another, you may notice a difference in the hardness or even the taste of your water.

If you're concerned about a change in the supply you're receiving, please contact us so we may investigate further. If we're aware of a change that may affect your property, we'll contact you (directly or through the media) to advise you what to do.

The most common problems we see are associated with internal/household plumbing systems, so it's very important that you only use approved materials and engage approved plumbers when working on your plumbing system. The Water Regulations Advisory Scheme (WRAS) and WaterSafe can help you do this. Their websites are www.wras.co.uk and www.watersafe.org.uk.

What do I do if I'm concerned about my drinking water?

You can read or download information sheets from our website which address the questions most frequently asked by our customers. However, if you have any concerns about the quality of your water please call our Services Helpline.

We'll investigate the problem and, if appropriate, take samples for analysis. We aim to provide you with test results within 10 working days.

What happens if there's a water quality problem?

On some rare occasions we may need to issue notices advising you of a problem and of precautionary actions to take such as boiling your water before you drink it or use it for cooking.

We'll always advise you in writing and by all other means possible, such as via the local media or SMS text message if this is the case.

We also liaise very closely with healthcare professionals at Public Health England (PHE), the Local Authority (LA), the Drinking Water Inspectorate and the Consumer Council for Water (CCW) in such circumstances.

Where can I get information about saving water?

You can visit our website for more information or call our Water Conservation Helpline on 0800 378937 and we'll send you our leaflet, [Top Tips for a Waterwise Home](#) and a variety of devices to help you save water. We can also provide information on metering and what to do if you have a leak.

What do you do to save water?

We have a legal responsibility to promote water efficiency to our customers. We implement initiatives to conserve water and reduce leakage and promote a range of water conservation measures, including:

- Information on switching to a water meter
- Assistance with helping to repair or replace service pipes when customers have a leak
- Advice on saving water around the home and garden
- Information on water-efficient appliances.

What if there's a water shortage?

Our pipes, pumps and treated water reservoirs are all designed to meet a normal level of peak demand. In our water resources plan, we set out our strategy to ensure that all customers have a secure supply of water.

Our record for not imposing restrictions on the water supply is extremely good and, with the help of our customers using water wisely, we aim not to have to impose a ban on the non-essential use of water more than once in 40 years on average.

However, if there is a water shortage, we may have to ask you to reduce the amount you use. This may include restricting the use of hosepipes and sprinklers. In exceptional conditions, we may have to resort to standpipes or other forms of rationing under a Drought Order.

If rationing through standpipes or other means is ever necessary, you'll be entitled to compensation under [*Our Customer Promise*](#). You can download it from our website at southwestwater.co.uk/cop or call us for a free copy.

What is the minimum water pressure I can expect to receive?

We guarantee to maintain a minimum pressure of seven metres static head (0.7 bar) in our part of the service pipe which connects your home to our water main. We must supply water at a pressure to reach the highest storey of every building unless the building is at a height such that water will not flow to it by gravitation from our service reservoir or tank.

We aim to provide a higher standard of service than this but there are still a few areas where the pressure doesn't reach the minimum standard.

In most cases, you can expect to receive a minimum pressure of 10 metres static head (1 bar) at the stop tap outside your property. This means that water will rise and fill a storage tank at second floor roof level.

Usually it will also mean that it takes approximately 30 seconds to fill a 1 gallon/4.5 litre bucket from your kitchen tap. However, your water supply pipe for which you're responsible and which connects your property to our pipework may reduce this pressure, particularly if your home is some distance from our main or the pipe connecting your home to our water main is undersized, old and corroded or is shared with neighbouring properties.

Your pressure can be temporarily affected when we carry out necessary works or during drought restrictions.

If you think that your water pressure is too low, please call our Services Helpline and we'll be happy to investigate this for you. We'll let you know what to do if the cause is, for example, due to a leak on your side of the service pipe; and if it's our responsibility, we'll take appropriate action.

Will my water supply be interrupted?

We work 24 hours a day to provide you with a constant supply of water. However, burst mains or the failure of pumps or their electricity supply can interrupt the flow of water. Your water supply may also be interrupted to allow us to carry out planned work.

As part of our programme of identifying and stopping leaks, we sometimes turn off sections of water mains at night. We usually do this between midnight and 6am and the interruptions normally last less than five minutes.

What notice will you give me if my supply is going to be interrupted?

We'll try to notify you if we intend to interrupt your supply but in an emergency this may not be possible. If we plan to interrupt your water supply for more than two hours, we'll give you at least 48 hours' written notice.

You can find further details about supply interruptions including timescales and information about alternative supplies in [Our Customer Promise](#) leaflet.

What will you do if my supply is going to be interrupted and I need additional help?

If you have a medical condition which means that your health will be put at risk if you're without water, or if you need us to provide notice to you in a particular way, please let us know so that we can enter your details on our Priority Services Register and make appropriate arrangements.

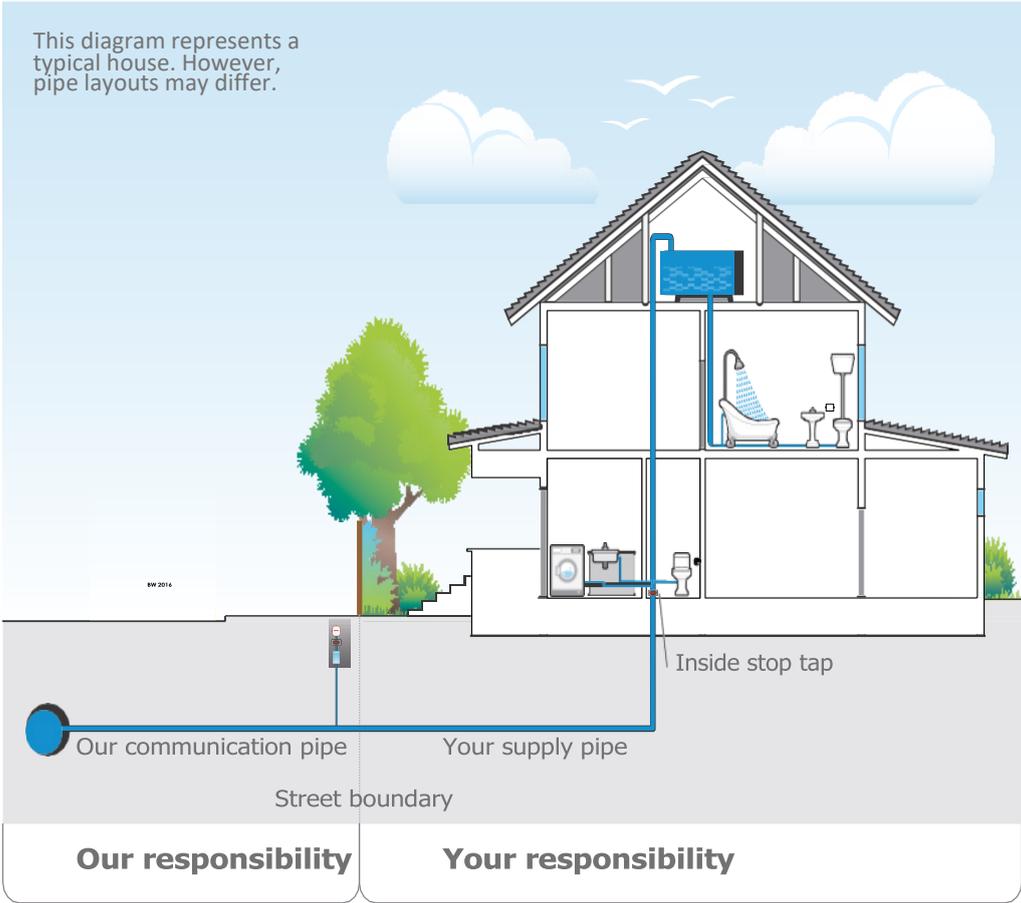
Please see our [Code of Practice on Priority Services](#) leaflet for further details and how to register.

Am I responsible for any pipework?

As a customer, it's very important for you (or your landlord) to be aware that you're responsible for maintaining the supply pipe which delivers water into your home as well as the plumbing in your home.

The diagram below shows which pipes are generally your responsibility and which ones are ours.

The Service pipe	The communication pipe	The supply pipe
<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>



If your property is some distance away from our water main, it's likely that you'll have a very long supply pipe which may run over third party land. Remember, you're responsible for the entire length of the service pipe from your house, all the way to the boundary of the street in which our water main is laid (or to the water main itself if it isn't in the street).

We don't hold information on private pipework but if you need help to confirm who's responsible for your particular service pipe, there are information sheets on our website southwestwater.co.uk/pipes.

What if I share my pipework with my neighbours?

If you share a service pipe with one or more of your neighbours, you may be jointly responsible for maintaining and repairing the shared supply pipe.

You may experience low pressure when water is being used in some or all of the houses at the same time and it may not be possible to turn off the supply without your supply or your neighbours' supply also being turned off.

Do I have to separate my shared pipework?

If your shared supply pipe is in poor condition, we'll normally require you and your neighbours to share the cost of replacing it with separate pipes. This will improve the flow and quality of the supply at your tap. We'll give you a 20% discount off our charges (up to a maximum of £250) for the work required to install and connect our parts of the new service pipes to the water main. We may also require separate service pipes to be installed if:

- A customer on a shared service pipe falls into arrears and won't agree a payment arrangement with us (this wouldn't affect any other customer on the shared service pipe who's paying their water bill as required)
- The houses on the shared service are converted into a larger number of flats or homes
- The shared pipe has been interfered with or we believe that interference is likely.

Any dispute which arises about replacing the pipe, which we're unable to resolve, may be referred to Ofwat.

Is it my responsibility to repair a leak on my supply pipe?

Yes, if there's a leak on your supply pipe, it's your responsibility to repair it. However, we can help you find a contractor to carry out the repair and in certain circumstances we make a financial contribution towards the cost of the renewal or repair.

If you're on a meter and find you have a leak you may also be entitled to a leak allowance. You can find further details in our leaflet, [Code of Practice on Leakage for Domestic Customers](#).

How can I report a leak?

We're very grateful to customers who report leaks from our water mains to us. You can check whether we're already aware of a leak, or report a leak using the online form at southwestwater.co.uk/report-a-leak or by calling our leak reporting line on 0800 230 0561.

What should I do if I have lead pipework?

Lead pipework is most commonly found in older properties. If you find that your property has lead pipework and you're worried about exposure to lead in your drinking water, you may want to consider replacing it.

If you replace the lead supply pipe for which you're responsible we'll replace any lead communication pipes for which we're responsible, free of charge, provided you give us enough notice. Please see [Our Customer Promise](#) leaflet for more information about replacing lead pipework, timescales, notice periods and our responsibilities.

If you have a lead service pipe which is shared (see above) and you and your neighbours agree to have it replaced, we'll require separate service pipes to be laid.

Grants may be available for renovation and minor works for certain households. Please contact your local authority before you start any work.

What should I do if I have a rusted service pipe?

Old iron service pipes can become badly rusted inside which can cause leaks, restrict flow and discolour water.

If you have a rusted service pipe we'll replace our part of the service pipe free of charge. If we find that your part of the service pipe also needs to be replaced, we'll only replace our part of the pipe once you've replaced yours to achieve the benefits to your water supply.

An approved plumber or local plumbing suppliers will be aware of the suitability of the replacement materials which should be used when replacing any pipework.

What can I do to prevent burst pipes?

Water pipes can freeze quite quickly in cold weather so you should make sure that your pipes, tanks and cisterns are properly insulated. In exceptionally cold weather conditions it's advisable to keep your heating on low during the day and night for the best protection.

Should my electricity be earthed through my water pipes?

The safe earthing of electrical appliances in your house is your responsibility. Your water service pipe shouldn't be used for earthing any of your household electrical installations. The provision of electrical earthing isn't one of our responsibilities.

Unfortunately, many houses (particularly those built before 1966) still rely on their water pipes for earthing but this practice is now prohibited.

If your house is one of these, please remember that if you renew your old metal pipe using plastic pipe this may reduce the effectiveness of the earth connection.

A qualified electrician will be able to provide you with advice on electrical earthing.

What do I do if I want to be connected to the public water supply for the first time?

If you require a new water supply from an existing main, you'll need to complete an application form. You can download an application pack from our website or call our Services Helpline and we'll send you one.

We'll acknowledge receipt of your completed application form within five calendar days of its arrival. At the time we acknowledge receipt, we'll arrange for a New Connections Technician to carry out a survey of your site or advise how you can arrange a convenient appointment.

We must connect any new premises to the water mains if you ask us to, but you'll have to pay our costs which will include the cost of making the connection, the cost of laying our part of the service pipe, installing a stop tap and water meter, and a fixed contribution to our overall costs of making water supplies available (unless the property had a mains water supply previously).¹

You can find further information about our water infrastructure charges in our [*New connections and Developer Services Charging Arrangements*](#).

What will happen when you survey the site?

A New Connections Technician will visit to discuss your requirements and assess the work required and we'll use these to provide a quote.

We aim to send you a quote within 28 calendar days of receiving your completed application form.

¹Some obligations do not currently apply to the Isles of Scilly. Please contact our developer services team for more information.

We'll tell you what you need to do before we'll make the connection. This may include:

- Laying your part of the service pipe to our specification
- Providing a separate service pipe to each part of the building or premises which will be separately occupied
- Ensuring that the regulations covering water fittings are complied with
- Obtaining any necessary consents from other landowners.

Subject to inspections, once you let us know that you've done all that we required of you, we'll connect the service pipe to a water main within 21 days. (It may be longer if highway restrictions are imposed – we'll notify you accordingly.) If we don't meet these deadlines and you suffer loss or damage as a result, you may have a legal claim against us. If there's disagreement between us about any of the above, the matter may be referred to an independent body or Ofwat.

You can find further information in our [Guide to obtaining new or replacement water connections](#).

Disputes regarding security must be referred to Ofwat before the work is carried out. Disputes about costs reasonably incurred can be referred to Ofwat when the work has been completed and after we've reviewed the charges against actual costs.

Should my pipework meet with any regulations?

Yes, your pipework and plumbing must comply with the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999.

These regulations are designed to prevent contamination of water supplies by preventing back-flow, back-siphonage and interconnections of water from other sources and should be referred to when carrying out any plumbing works. If these regulations are not complied with you may incur a penalty. Please call our Services Helpline for more information.

What happens if I need a new water main?

You can ask us to provide a new water main but it must serve two or more properties which haven't previously had a connection to our network either directly or indirectly.

We'll require some financial security from you before doing the work. For our part, we must provide the water main within three months of your agreeing that we do so, unless you agree to an extension of time. If we don't meet this deadline, and you sustain loss or damage as a result, you may have a legal claim against us.

If we can't agree the amount which you must pay, or there's a dispute about extending the three-month period, the route of the main or the amount of security which you should give, either of us can refer the matter to Ofwat for a decision.

Can I arrange to lay my own water mains and connections?

Yes, as an alternative to having new mains and service connections installed by us, developers can arrange for the work to be carried out by qualified contractors.

A national code of practice is available and this should be read in conjunction with our published documents. This is known as 'self-lay', and you can access further information on our website southwestwater.co.uk/selflay.

Are you allowed access to my property?

Yes, in certain circumstances we have a legal right to access private property, sometimes without prior contact. These include powers of entry to take water quality samples and inspect for breaches of the Water Fittings Regulations.

We'll always explain why we need access and will always try to call at a reasonable time and try to agree a time of entry. In most cases we'll give you appropriate advance notice which is usually seven days. In an emergency we may not be able to give you advance notice but we'll try to contact you as soon as possible.

If you're not satisfied

If you're not satisfied please let us know. If you have a complaint about your water supply you can let us know by calling our Services Helpline, writing to us or emailing us via our website.

Consumer Council for Water (CCW)

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

Email: via form on website ccwater.org.uk

Address: 1st floor
Victoria Square House
Victoria Square
Birmingham B2 4AJ

Water Industry Redress Scheme (WATRS)

If your complaint remains unresolved after it's been 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. You can find details on how and when to apply at watsr.org or contact:

Telephone: 020 7520 3801

Email: info@watsr.org

Address:

WATRS

International Dispute Resolution Centre

70 Fleet Street

London EC4Y 1EU

How can I contact Ofwat?

Ofwat protects the interests of customers of all water and wastewater companies in accordance with legislative provisions and Government licences. You can contact them at:

Telephone: 0121 644 7500

Email: casemanagementoffice@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk

Address: Case Management Office, OFWAT

Centre City Tower

7 Hill Street

Birmingham

B5 4UA

Under the Water Industry Act 1991, certain disputes can be referred to Ofwat or an independent arbitrator for a decision. You can find further details our [Complaints and Compliments](#) leaflet.

Where we can't reach an agreement with you in such cases, we'll inform you of your right to refer the matter to another body.

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.

