



# Water Leaks & Your Responsibilities

## Information & Guidance



South Staffs Water

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# 1. Introduction

Leaks from underground pipes waste large amounts of water and could damage your property. Not only that, but if you have a water meter, you will be being charged for the wasted water. Underground pipes are not just our responsibility; property owners are responsible for some, or all, of the pipework below ground that connects their property to the water supply system.

Experience tells us that householders are not aware they are responsible for the maintenance and replacement of their water supply pipe and only realise when there's a problem. The supply pipe is below ground, so is not easily maintained. Problems are usually the result of gradual deterioration over a long period, but like most household items, supply pipes have only an average lifespan and will lead to difficulties if they are not maintained or replaced.

As you're reading this booklet, it's probably because you already have a problem with your supply pipe, or think you may have one. If your supply pipe is old, you might want to consider replacing it, which is a long term solution to potential problems.

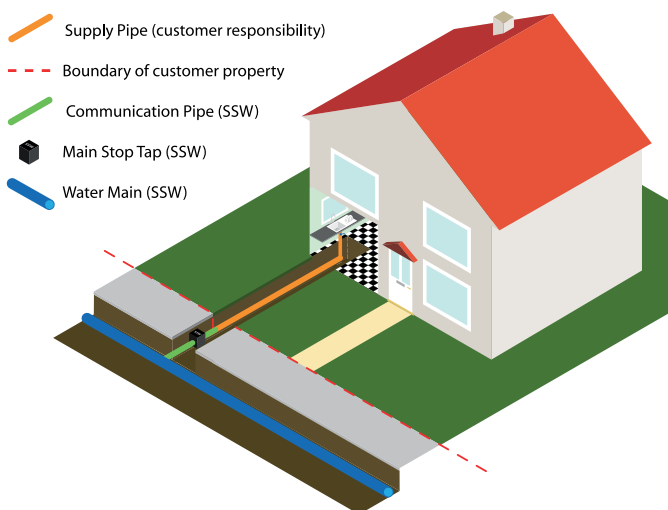
Alternatively, you could opt to insure your pipework against future problems. There are companies that offer a range of policies, which include internal plumbing and drainage and you can specifically cover your supply pipe. Any of these decisions are your responsibility as the property owner.

This leaflet will provide answers to the queries you may have and also outline any assistance that you may be entitled to from us.

**If you have a leak on an above ground pipe or fittings, you will need to contact a plumber for help.**

## 2. Who is responsible for underground pipework?

We are responsible for the **water mains** and for the pipe that connects the **water main** to the **main stop tap** in the street; this is commonly known as the “**communication pipe**”. From the property’s boundary, up to and including all internal pipework, is the responsibility of the owner of the property. The boundary is normally at the edge of the public footpath or, where there is no footpath, the edge of the road.



Where a **water main** is not laid in a highway but in a field or other private land, a property owner may be responsible for the full length of the **supply pipe** up to the point at which it is connected to the **water main**.

The property owner is responsible for a **supply pipe** even if it is laid in land owned by someone else. The deeds to a property may include easements allowing the property owner access to the pipe for repair and maintenance.

Where a **supply pipe** is used to supply a number of properties, the pipe is usually the joint responsibility of the owners of all the properties it serves.

**Water escaping from a leak is a loss of a valuable resource. If a leak/fault is reported or detected we will send you a Defective Fittings Notice, giving you 14 days to repair the leak/faulty fittings or have the supply pipe replaced.**

### 3. Who is responsible for repairing the supply pipe if there is a leak?

The owner or owners of the property or properties connected to the **supply pipe** are responsible for repair and maintenance of the pipe. If you're a tenant, the **supply pipe** and maintenance of the property is usually your landlord's responsibility, but you must pass on information to avoid delay of the repair.

For leasehold properties, the property owner needs to check the leasehold agreement to determine responsibility for repair and maintenance and advise us accordingly. Failure to do so may result in a bill being issued for payment for any work carried out and the property owner will be responsible for payment.

## 4. Am I entitled to any assistance from South Staffs Water?

**No contribution will be made for replacements claimed via insurance policies.**

**No assistance is provided for properties classed as commercial dwellings or council owned or housing association properties.**

If you are an owner of a **private domestic property** and you have a leak on your **supply pipe**, we may offer a *once only* **free repair service** or a contribution of up to £300.00 towards the full replacement of the **supply pipe that meets our policy terms and conditions.**

Eligibility for the **free repair** is subject to the following conditions:

- **If you fail to sign and return the Free Repair Service Agreement in 14 days, you will forfeit the right to the free repair. You will be billed for any works carried out.**
- We will only carry out a **temporary reinstatement** of the ground in order to make it safe. If we have to excavate landscaped areas or surfaces such as block paving, it is your responsibility to replace them.
- A full replacement includes the point of entry to the boundary of the property, which is normally on the public highway.
- **Free repairs** are restricted to single supply pipes up to 20 metres in length and up to 32mm in diameter. On shared supplies, the length of the pipe may not be restricted, however, a restriction of 63mm in diameter will be applied.

- After 10 working days, arrangements will be made for the site safety equipment to be removed. South Staffs Water will not be held liable for any personal injury thereafter.
- Excavations will be limited to one x 3 metre length or three separate trial holes of 1 metre in length each to locate and repair the leak. If we exceed either of these options we will not go any further with work under the free repair service. You will be responsible for ensuring that any further work is carried out to repair the leak.
- If the leak is located underneath a building/ structure or is internal, you will not qualify for a **free repair**.
- **We have the right to withdraw the free repair service at any time** if we are incurring excessive charges that are deemed unreasonable for a **free repair**.
- The detection and pinpointing of a leak is carried out before the repair is done or at the time of the repair.
- The free repair service is **not an emergency service** and any visits and repairs will be carried out during normal working hours.

Full conditions are detailed in our Free Leak Agreement form or can be found in our Code of Practice for Leakage.

If you qualify for a **free repair**, please return forms with your contact details. We will then carry out the repair as soon as possible.

**Once you have benefited from our free repair service, you may want to think about insuring your pipework to protect yourself against further leaks.**

## 5. How are leaks located?

We look for leaks, mainly by listening for them using specialist equipment, but high meter readings and poor water pressure may indicate a leak on a supply pipe.

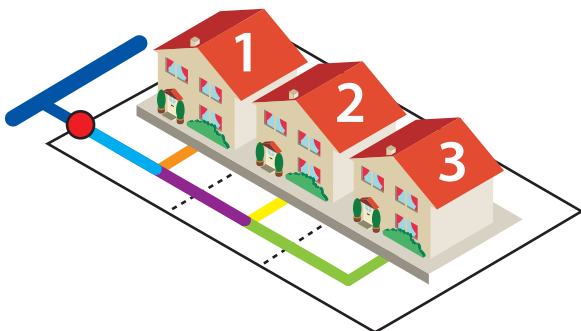
It is not always obvious that there is a leak. Even when water rises to the surface it does not necessarily mean the leak is located at this point, as water tends to find the easiest route of escape. Leak detection is not an exact science and it is not always possible to locate some leaks using listening devices alone - it may be necessary to excavate. Leaks from plastic pipes are harder to locate as they are quieter than those from metal-based pipes and therefore the sound is more difficult to hear. In addition, property owners do not always have accurate records of the route of their **supply pipes** and any alterations that may have taken place.

In some cases, it may be necessary to carry out excavation work to pinpoint the leak. In view of difficulties that may be experienced in locating leaks, for example when the leak is under a building, your contractor may recommend replacement of the **supply pipe** to help prevent future leaks.

## 6. What do I need to do if the leak is on a shared supply pipe?

If it is not clear where the leak is, or if it is on a **supply pipe** used by a number of properties, it is the joint responsibility of the owners of those properties concerned to reach an agreement on what action needs to be taken.

We suggest that one person is appointed to represent you all. However, if you feel unable to approach your neighbour(s), you may wish to contact a solicitor or some other person to act on your behalf.



### Key

—	Street Boundary
- - - -	Premises Boundary
— (blue)	Water Main
● (red)	Main Stop Tap
— (light blue)	Common Supply Pipe
— (purple)	Common Supply Pipe
— (orange)	Supply Pipe
— (yellow)	Supply Pipe
— (green)	Supply Pipe

### Maintenance Responsibility

-	South Staffs Water
-	South Staffs Water
-	Customers 1,2 & 3 jointly
-	Customers 2 & 3 jointly
-	Customers 1,2 & 3 individually

## 7. I pay metered water charges and the leak is recording through my meter. Can I claim an allowance towards the excess water?

Our policy on leaks allows a *once only* allowance for both **domestic** and **commercial** customers. **In order to qualify for this allowance, the leak/fault must have been rectified/repared within 30 days of you becoming aware of it.** We may grant you an allowance for both the water and sewerage elements based on the excess charges raised on your bill.

- Customers will only be offered one allowance for leaks.
- Allowances are only backdated over one billing period.
- No allowance will be granted for water escaping from pipework/fittings other than the **supply pipe** i.e. overflows, internal fittings.
- No allowance will be given in the case of negligence/damage by the customer/property owner.

Details of burst allowances can be found in our Code of Practice for Leakage. Please contact Billing Enquiries on **0845 60 70 456** for a claim form.

## 8. Can I arrange for the repair to be done myself?

Yes, you can. If you have an insurance policy that covers the work, you will need to contact your insurance company to discuss with them what needs to be done and they will probably arrange for the necessary work to be carried out. Or, you can arrange for contractors yourself.

## 9. What is the likely cost of a repair?

Given our experience, for a basic repair on an average domestic property, we would estimate a cost of around £300.00. However, this will vary depending on the amount of work involved and your choice of contractor/plumber.

## 10. What if my contractor/plumber says there is no leak?

Please contact our Leak Administration team on **0845 345 1422** and we will arrange for further investigations to be carried out by our own operatives. If investigations show that there is no evidence of a leak, we will reimburse you for any costs incurred. You will need to provide a dated receipt/invoice.

## 11. What should I do once the leak has been repaired or replaced?

Once the **supply pipe** has been repaired or replaced, please complete the **reply form** and return in the prepaid envelope immediately. If any work is carried out close to the end of the 14 day notice period, please contact our Leak Administration team on **0845 345 1422**.

## 12. What will happen if I do not repair my leak?

Initially, you are issued with a Defective Fittings Notice advising you of a possible leak on your supply. You have 14 days in which to ensure the **supply pipe** is repaired or replaced. If you have not taken the necessary action within this 14 day period, we will use our statutory powers to look at what should be done. Alternatively, if the property is commercial, we will assess what we need to do to fit a water meter. In doing so, you will be paying for all the excess consumption that passes through the meter.

**If it's necessary to do this, we will seek to recover all costs associated with the repair. If you are affected by the repair, you will be sent a bill for payment.**

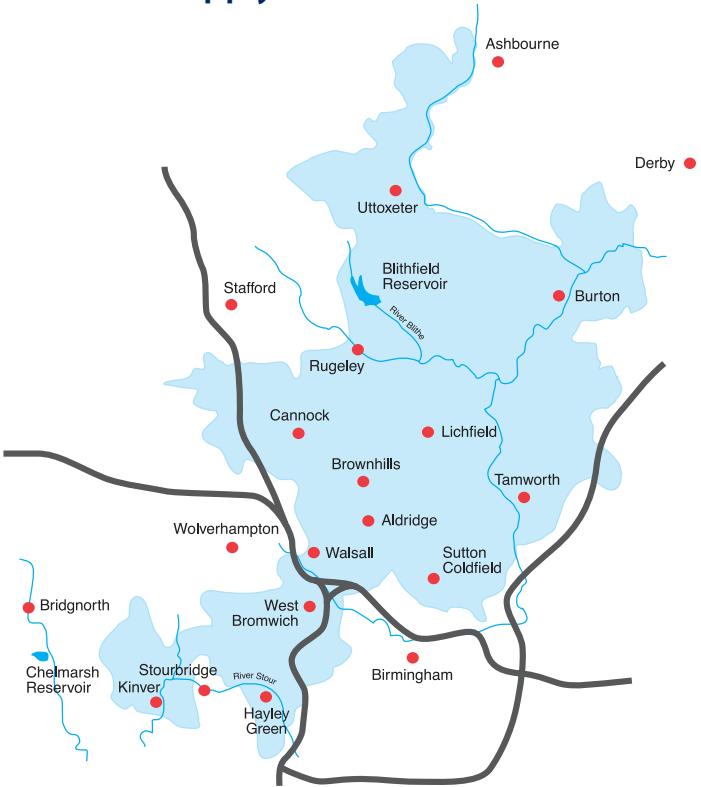
**It is in your own interests to ensure any leak is rectified, as this could damage your property or driveway.**

## 13. Who should I contact if I have any queries?

If you have any difficulties or need further assistance, please contact our Leak Administration team on:

**0845 345 1422**

## 14. Our supply area



## 15. Staying in touch

Please keep these contact details in case you need to get in touch with us at any time.

### Billing & general enquiries

Bill enquiries .....	0845 60 70 456
To pay by Direct Debit .....	0845 60 70 456
To apply for a meter .....	0845 45 67 063
Provide a meter reading .....	0845 60 70 456

### Water issues

Supply problems .....	0800 389 10 11	(24 hours)
Reporting a leak .....	0800 389 10 11	(24 hours)

### Other useful numbers

Minicom Textphone .....	01922 61 80 25
Genuine caller? .....	0800 389 10 11
Crimestoppers .....	0800 555 111
Sewer & drainage issues (Severn Trent Water) .....	0800 783 44 44
Fax .....	01922 61 62 39

**Opening hours - General Account Enquiries**

**7am – 8pm Mon-Fri , 8am – 1pm Sat**

**Opening hours - Supply Problems**

**7 days a week**

**[www.south-staffs-water.co.uk](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk)**



**South Staffs Water**

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2466/4/2012