

Our Code of Practice
for Leakage

v2

South Staffs Water

Code of Practice – Leakage

This booklet is our Code of Practice for Leakage, which has been approved by OFWAT, the economic regulator. Together with our Customer Code and Debt Code this forms part of our suite of Code of Practice leaflets.

You can obtain copies of these documents and other useful information, such as water efficiency either through our website, **www.south-staffs-water.co.uk** or by telephoning us on **0845 60 70 456**.

Opening hours are: Monday to Friday 7am to 8pm and Saturday 8am to 1pm.

Water is a precious resource and as a Company we have a duty to prevent water wastage through leaks and to promote the efficient use of water to our customers. We are investing more than £12 million per year in this area.

This leaflet sets out the responsibility of the Company and details those of the customer/property owner, as well as how the Company may assist in the event of a leak being discovered on a private supply, in addition to the actions required.

If you see or suspect you have a leak please telephone our freephone Leak Line on **0800 389 10 11**.

This Code of Practice applies to household customers; measured and unmeasured, including mixed use properties.

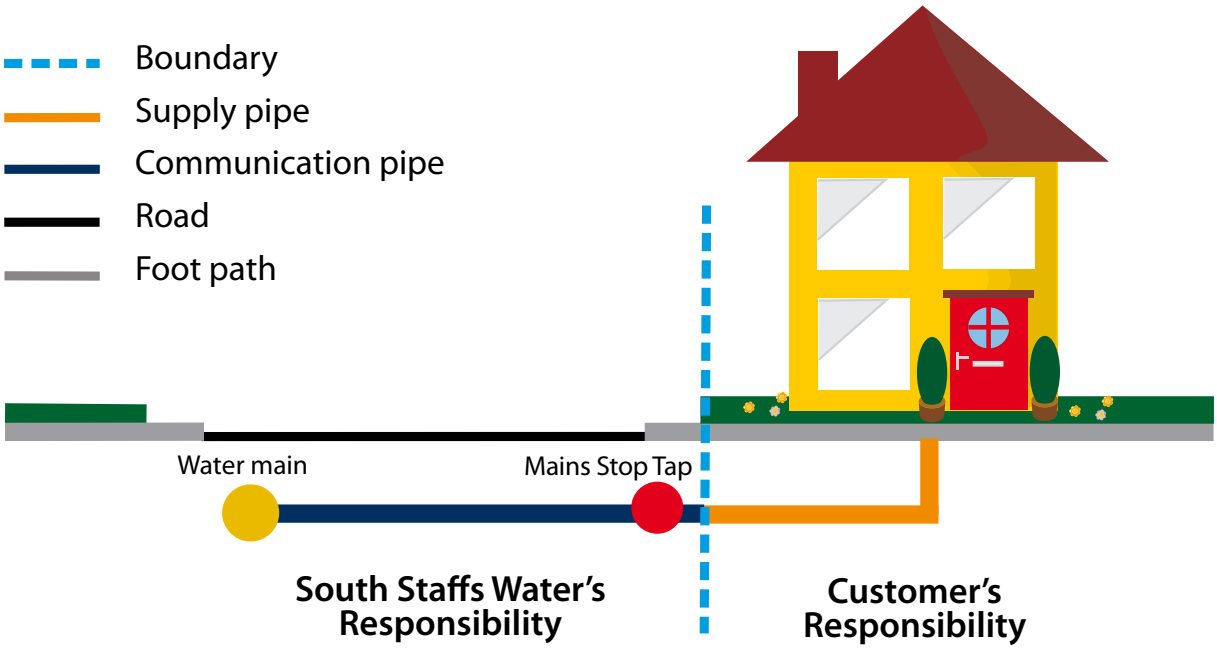
Spotting a Leak

Leaks from pipes can result in large water loss. We check for leaks on our part of the network and you should check for leaks on yours. However, we also need your help to spot leaks anywhere on our supply. Some leaks are not always noticeable. Look for damp areas on the ground in dry weather or lush vegetation during hot periods.

If you are on a meter you may also notice unusually high meter readings and you may be paying for any lost water. So it is advisable to take monthly check readings to see if you have a leak. If you suspect you might have a leak, call our free phone Leak Line on **0800 389 10 11** to report it and we will tell you what you should do. If you spot a leak in the road or anywhere else, please let us know.

Pipework Responsibility

The following diagram sets out the split between what is the responsibility of "you" the property owner and "us" the Company.



The 'service pipe' is the water pipe that connects our water main to your property. This service pipe has two parts:

The 'communication pipe' runs from our water main to the boundary of your property (usually the back of the public footpath). The Company is responsible for its repair, maintenance and replacement.

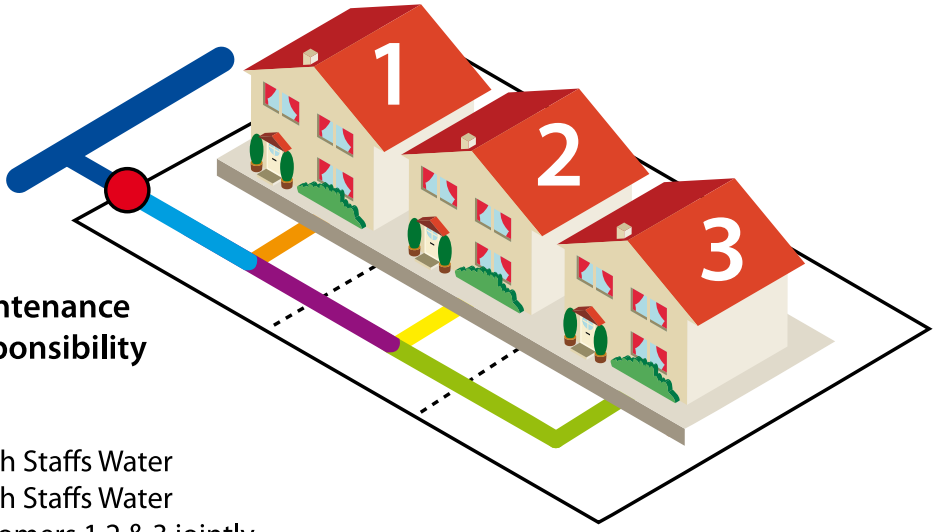
The 'supply pipe' runs from the boundary to your property. The owner of the property is responsible for its repair, maintenance and replacement.

The 'main stop tap' is generally located in the footpath and is the property of South Staffs Water. The main stop tap should not be relied upon for isolating a supply in the event of an emergency. You should ensure that there is an operable branch stop tap on your property.

Although the property owner is responsible for the supply pipe, you could qualify for a 'Once Only' Free Repair or alternatively a contribution towards replacement of this pipework under certain conditions. Details of this scheme can be found on page 7 of this Code of Practice.

Shared Pipework Responsibility

You may share your supply pipe with your neighbour(s). This is common for many older properties. This diagram illustrates a typical shared supply arrangement and explains how responsibility is split between each of the properties.



Key		Maintenance Responsibility
	Street Boundary	-
	Premises Boundary	-
	Water Main	South Staffs Water
	Main Stop Tap	South Staffs Water
	Common Supply Pipe	Customers 1,2 & 3 jointly
	Common Supply Pipe	Customers 2 & 3 jointly
	Supply Pipe	Customers 1,2 & 3 individually

Please note that as supply pipes are privately owned South Staffs Water are unable to provide information in respect of the layout of the pipework. However, should you be unsure as to whether your supply is shared please contact our supply line on 0800 389 10 11 and we may be able to assist you. If we are unable to conclude your enquiry over the telephone, we may need to visit your property.

For Information: Our main stop tap (normally located at the boundary of your property in the footpath) is our responsibility and we will maintain it. Please note that we do not prioritise repairs of the main stop tap, as we have alternative methods of isolating a supply should this be necessary. A property owner should ensure they have an operable branch stop tap to isolate the supply in the event of an emergency.

Identifying Leaks

Metered Customers

If you are on a meter, you pay for the water you use. If you have a leak, you may be paying for the lost water too. Even a small leak on your supply pipe or defective fittings may result in a much higher bill than you were expecting. You can read your meter monthly in order to spot any change in your consumption or monitor your bills to look out for a sudden increase that might indicate a leak.

If you have a meter, at least one bill each year will be based on a meter reading. All other bills will be estimated. If you wish to provide us with a meter reading and you are unable to read the meter yourself we can arrange to read it for you. Please contact our Customer Helpline on **0845 60 70 456**.

Opening hours: Monday to Friday 7am to 8pm and Saturday 8am to 1pm.

If you think there might be a leak on your supply, you can carry out a simple check. Firstly, make sure there are no taps or water-using equipment (e.g. washing machines) running in your house and then take a reading from your meter. Wait one hour and then take another reading. If the reading has increased you may have a leak.

If a leak is identified, you could qualify for a Free Repair or a Contribution towards the replacement of this pipework under certain conditions. Information about this can be found on page 7 of this Code of Practice. If you have any questions, please contact our Supply Line on **0800 389 10 11**.

Meter Location

The position of the meter will be decided in line with Government Regulations. There are three possible locations for a meter; internally, externally in a meter box or externally on the wall of the house. Our preferred meter location is externally at the boundary of the property. This is normally where our existing main stop tap (MST) is located either on the footpath or just within the boundary of the property.

If this is not possible, usually due to shared supplies, then it may be necessary to install an internal meter at the point of entry of the supply to the property, provided this is prior to any pipework branches or external taps. Internal meters will be connected to an external touch pad to ensure that we are able to take a reading without the need to enter the property. The touch pad will be fitted on an externally accessible point and is a necessary part of the internal meter installation.

Where it is not possible to install a single meter as above, then we may offer to install more than one meter (subject to the exception of flats).

We will install meters as above, free of charge, provided that it is not impracticable or unreasonably expensive.

The criteria for unreasonable costs are where we may have to separate a supply or install the meter in an alternative location at the specific request of the customer.

Where an alternative location is chosen, we reserve the right to charge you for any additional costs incurred. You will have seven days to decide if you wish to proceed with the installation where additional costs are involved.

For customers requiring special assistance, we may waive the charges depending upon individual circumstances.

If a second meter is to be fitted at the property, the customer will be liable for a charge. Please see our Statement of Water Charges and Charges Scheme for the current year or our 'Your Guide to Household Water Meters' booklet for the relevant charge.

Leakage checks when a meter is installed for the first time

We know from experience that a substantial amount of water escapes from undetected leaks on customers' pipework. When a meter is installed, a check will be made to establish if there are any leaks on the pipework.

If a leak is detected on your supply pipe and this can be repaired without additional excavation at the time the meter is installed, we will repair this free of charge. However, if the leak cannot be repaired without additional excavation, you will be notified of the leak and asked to repair it at your own expense. You could qualify for a Free Repair or a Contribution towards the replacement of this pipework under certain conditions. Information about this scheme can be found on page 7 of this Code of Practice.

Should you have a leak on an above ground pipe or internal fittings, you will need to ensure this is rectified. We will not consider fitting a meter to the supply until we are satisfied that repairs have been undertaken.

Leakage from Underground Pipework

Where a meter is installed externally it will record any leakage from the private underground supply pipe between the meter and the property. You pay for the water you use, so if water is running to waste, you will be paying for this and you may receive a large bill. We may give you an allowance to compensate for the lost water if the leak is repaired within our specified timescales. This scheme is explained in the section 'Leakage Allowances' on page 9.

To stop water running to waste we have a legal right that requires you to repair any leaks/faults on the supply pipe or defective fittings. We will issue you with a Defective Fittings Notice that gives you 14 days in which to ensure the leak is repaired or faulty fittings are rectified. We may be able to offer assistance for the leakage on your supply pipe. Please refer to 'Assistance for Domestic Dwellings' on page 7. In the unlikely event of a customer disregarding such a request and allowing water to run to waste (or to contaminate the public water supply), we will carry out the repair work on a compulsory basis. We will undertake any necessary work and charge the owner of the property or, in extreme situations, turn off the water supply until repair work is undertaken to avoid wastage.

Assistance for Domestic Only Dwellings

The Company is committed to reducing water wastage and, as such, we operate a 'Once Only' Free Repair Service for domestic only properties. You could qualify for a '**Once Only**' repair or, alternatively, a **£300.00 contribution** towards replacement of this pipework under certain conditions. The scheme applies **per property** not customer. In order to qualify the **property** must not have benefited from the previous free repair service or contribution based scheme offered by the Company since 1997. We will issue a Defective Fittings Notice advising you of the leak and, should you qualify, we will provide details of the scheme and an agreement form for completion. There are conditions that apply:

Conditions of our Free Repair Service:

- The detection and pinpointing of a leak is undertaken by our contractors at the time of the repair and is included as part of our Free Repair Service. However, a separate free detection service is not offered for customers who have repairs undertaken using insurance policies or for customers not eligible for a Free Repair. Water rising to the surface does not necessarily mean the leak is located at this point. Leak detection is not an exact science and it is not always possible to locate some leaks using listening devices alone. In some circumstances, we need to use specialist equipment to trace the exact location of the leak.
- We will only undertake a temporary reinstatement and make safe. It is the customer's responsibility to permanently reinstate any affected areas at their own cost. The Company does not accept any liability for replanting/landscaping garden areas including reinstatement of special surfaces such as printed concrete, coloured bitumastics and/or block paving.
- 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.
- Excavations will be limited to 1 x 3 metre length or 3 separate trial holes of 1 metre in length each to locate and repair the burst.
- Any repair work is guaranteed for a 12 month period.
- If the leak is located underneath a building/structure, you will not qualify for a free repair. However, you will not be charged for the investigation work undertaken to determine the location of the leak\. If we have not incurred considerable expense in the process of confirming the location of leak then we may consider contributing an allowance towards the cost of re-routing the supply pipe to eliminate the leak. This would then be deemed as your free repair and, as such, no further assistance would be permitted.
- Through our repair process should it be proved that the leak is located internally in the property this will not be covered under the Free Repair Service and it will be the customer's responsibility to ensure this is rectified. No financial assistance will be given by ourselves.
- The Company has 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 Free Repair Service is not an emergency service and any visits and repairs will be

carried out during normal working hours. Should the customer feel that the repair is an emergency they have the option to employ the services of a contractor/plumber of their own choice and they will be responsible for any associated costs.

- The property is a private domestic dwelling.
- You agree to be bound by the conditions of the Free Repair Scheme.
- Should the owner(s) of a commercial property paying unmeasured charges choose not to repair the said leak/fault of which they have been notified, the Company has the option to install a water meter at the boundary of the property. In doing so, the customer will then pay for the water wastage.
- Metered Properties: A "Once Only" leakage allowance is also available dependant on the leak/fault being repaired/rectified. We will allow a maximum of 30 days for works to be undertaken in order to qualify for an allowance.
- The Company is unable to guarantee that, as a result of the Free Repair, the existing supply pipe will be free from further defects or leakage. Should any further associated problems occur there will be no further entitlement under our Scheme and any defects must be repaired at the customer's own cost.
- The Customer accepts that under the Scheme we will only undertake a repair on the private underground pipework in conjunction with the conditions of the Scheme. We are under no obligation to repair or alter any pipework or fittings, specifically excluding internal private pipework.
- For any leak that occurs on private pipework, including the supply pipe, the Company will not be responsible for any loss, damage or any associated costs/expenses resulting from any escaped water from the supply pipe or fittings at the property.

Alternative Assistance

As an alternative to opting for our Free Repair Service, the Company will provide a 'Once Only' Contribution towards the costs of a full replacement of the private supply pipe. If you are eligible for our 'Once Only' Free Repair Service/Contribution, the Company will issue information to the customer together with details of its recognised contractors that would be able to undertake such work and provide quotations.

It is important to note that, if the supply pipe to your property has never been replaced, it may be prudent for you to insure your supply pipe against possible leakage in the future or alternatively you may wish to consider relaying the pipework.

We recommend that you use a recognised contractor or plumber to carry out work on your behalf. Should you choose to employ one of these contractors, you are entering into an agreement directly with them and South Staffs Water are not responsible for their service or any other associated problems. We hold details of contractors and plumbers within our area. Please contact our Supply Line on **0800 389 10 11**.

Leakage Allowance Guidance & Rules

If water leaking from your supply pipe is recorded through your meter, you will be billed for it. The allowance will be applied even if the leak is located underneath a building/ structure. It is our policy to refund the charge of this extra water by comparing how much water you use once the leak has been repaired. The adjustment will be based upon the customer's past consumption. Where there is no record of past consumption, the adjustment shall be based upon typical usage for the property of a similar type and the customer's measured charges shall be further adjusted if the customer's subsequent actual usage is significantly different.

The leakage allowance will only be granted provided that the leak/fault is repaired within the 14 days following the issue of the Defective Fittings Notice. We will allow a maximum of 30 days for works to be undertaken in order to qualify for an allowance. Once the Company has received your completed Leakage Questionnaire, including meter readings, your account will be adjusted. The leakage allowance is usually applied to one billing period only, i.e one quarterly period. If the excess water did not drain into the public sewer under Severn Trent Water's policy for whom we collect these charges, we will grant a 100% allowance on your excess sewerage charges for the same period. You will be advised of the adjustment within 10 working days.

When applying for a leakage allowance, this should be submitted within 12 months of repairing or relaying the supply.

However, if we have information that you have in some way, hindered or delayed the repair to the leaking supply pipe, we will reduce the allowance to a maximum of 50%. We will not make any adjustment where a leak has been caused through the negligence of the customer/property owner.

If you purposely ignore the repair of any leak we will refuse to grant any allowance for either water or sewerage. It is not our policy to grant an allowance for either water or sewerage for second or subsequent leaks.

Please contact our Customer Helpline on **0845 60 70 456** for a Leakage Questionnaire should you think you may qualify.

Limitations of this Code of Practice

This Code of Practice applies to household customers; measured and unmeasured, including mixed use properties.

Water Efficiency Plan

Water Efficiency benefits are uncertain and costly. However, the Company takes its obligations to ensure the efficient use of water in its functions very seriously and will continue to undertake the current level of water efficiency activity. 'Hippo' cistern devices are available to customers on request, water butts are promoted within the Company's 'Waterline' publication sent to all customers at annual billing and leaflets detailing water saving tips are available on request. Further information is available on our website: www.south-staffs-water.co.uk.

Complaints

If you have a complaint against our contractors or us then you can contact us either by telephone or in writing. You can call us on **0845 60 70 456** and our Customer Services team will aim to resolve your complaint at the time of your call. If you write to us then our Customer Relations team will investigate your complaint and provide you with a full response within 10 working days. The address to write to is:

Customer Relations
South Staffs Water Plc
Green Lane
Walsall
WS2 7PD

Additional Information

The Consumer Council for Water (CCWater) was set up to represent the interests of customers. They can provide you with independent advice. If you have a complaint or a dispute that we are unable to resolve directly with you, CCWater can investigate further to help reach agreement. You can contact them on **08457 023 953**, by e-mail **central@ccwater.org.uk**. Alternatively, you can make your enquiry or complaint through their website **www.ccwater.org.uk** or by writing to them: Consumer Council for Water Central, 1st Floor, Victoria Square House, Victoria Square, Birmingham B2 4AJ. They also have a minicom number **0121 345 1044**.

Customer Information

Further information is available either from our website **www.south-staffs-water.co.uk**, by calling **0845 60 70 456** or by writing to us at South Staffs Water PLC, Green Lane, Walsall, WS2 7PD. Other leaflets include:

- Code of Practice for Domestic Customers
- Unable to Pay Leaflet
- Surface Water Drainage Leaflet
- How We Handle Your Complaint
- Your Guide to Household Water Meters Booklet
- Special Needs Leaflet
- Water Efficiency Leaflets
- Our Guaranteed Standards of Services Leaflet

How to contact South Staffs Water

Enquiries about your bill	**0845 60 70 456** (Mon-Fri 7am-8pm, Sat 8am-1pm)
	01922 616239 (fax)
Supply Line	**0800 389 10 11**
Leak Line	**0800 389 10 11**
Household Meter Option	**0845 45 67 063**
Meter Reading	**0845 60 70 456** (to provide us with a reading)
To set up a Direct Debit	**0845 60 70 456**
New Water Connections	**01922 618062**
Minicom Service	**01922 618025**
Sewerage & Drainage Issues	**0800 783 4444**

How to contact Consumer Council for Water Central

Email	**central@ccwater.org.uk**
Telephone	**08457 023 953**
By post	**Consumer Council for Water Central** **1st Floor, Victoria Square House** **Victoria Square** **Birmingham** **B2 4AJ**