



# **Water Leakage & Your Responsibilities**

## Information & Guidance



South Staffs Water

## Contents

1. Introduction
2. Who is responsible for underground pipework?
3. Who is responsible for repairing the supply pipe if there is a leak?
4. Am I entitled to any assistance from South Staffs Water?
5. How are leaks located?
6. What do I need to do if the leak is on a shared supply pipe?
7. I pay metered water charges and the leak is recording through my meter. Can I claim an allowance towards the excess water?
8. What should I do once the leak has been repaired or replaced?
9. What if my contractor/plumber says there is no leak?
10. What is the likely cost of a repair?
11. What will happen if I do not repair my leak?
12. Who should I contact if I have any queries?
13. Our supply area
14. Staying in touch

# 1. Introduction

Water is a valuable resource and leaks from underground pipes can waste large amounts of water and money and they could damage your property. 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.

The water supply pipe for which you are responsible is probably one of the most important assets of your household. Experience has shown us that when purchasing a property, customers are not always aware that they are responsible for the maintenance and replacement of this pipework. This only becomes apparent as and when it becomes defective. It is important to remember that as the supply pipe of a property is underground, this is not easily maintained.

In most cases it becomes problematic due to wear and tear and subsequent deterioration of the pipework over a lengthy period of time. Like most items that you would buy for use within the home, your supply pipe will only have an average life span and will begin to cause problems if it has never been maintained or replaced.

As you are reading this leaflet, it's probably because you already have a problem with your supply pipe, or think you may have one. It is important to note that if your supply pipe is old, we would recommend that you consider replacing it, which is a long term solution to potential problems.

Alternatively, you can opt to insure your pipework. 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 the responsibility of a property owner. However, we would recommend that you consider this to protect yourself against future problems.

The purpose of this leaflet is to provide answers to the queries you may have and also to 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 assistance.**

## **2. Who is responsible for underground pipework?**

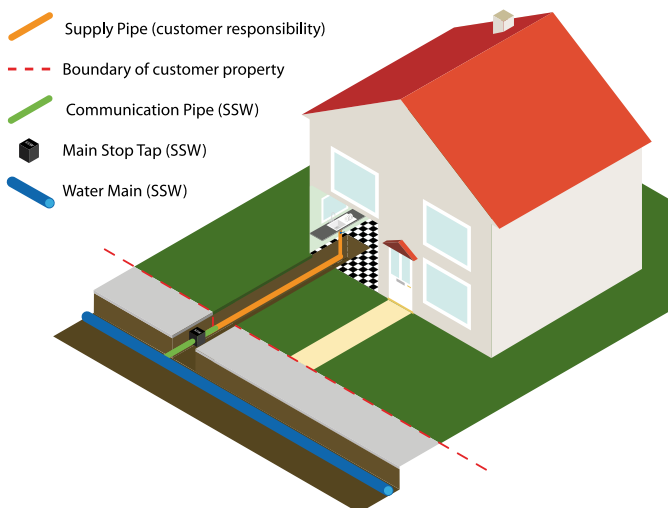
We are responsible for the large diameter underground pipes that distribute water around our area of supply. These are called **water mains**. We are also responsible for the pipe that connects the **water main** to the **main stop tap** in the street, this is commonly known as the "**communication pipe**". From the boundary, up to and including all internal pipework, is the responsibility of the owner of the property. This is normally indicated by the edge of the public highway.

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. Alternatively, you can 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. However, if you are a tenant, even if the repair of the **supply pipe** and maintenance of the property in question falls to your landlord, it is the tenant's responsibility to 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 works undertaken and the property owner will be responsible for payment.

In the case of larger leaks, or leaks causing difficulties for other customers, we will use our statutory powers to ensure a repair is carried out as necessary. Should a case be deemed an emergency, i.e. when the leak is causing danger to people, damage to property or is affecting supplies, we will seek to isolate the supply by any means necessary.

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

If you are an owner of a private domestic dwelling and you have a leak on your **supply pipe** we may offer either a **free repair service** or a contribution of up to £300.00 towards the full replacement of the **supply pipe**. This is a once only offer.

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

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

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

**Should 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 undertaken**

- We will only carry out a **temporary reinstatement**.
- **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 1 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 undertaken 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 undertaken prior to the repair being made 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.

Please note, 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 look to carry out the repair as soon as possible.

**Please remember it is advisable to insure your pipework once you have benefited from our free repair service.**



## 5. How are leaks located?

Various methods: leak detection teams, high meter readings, poor water pressure.

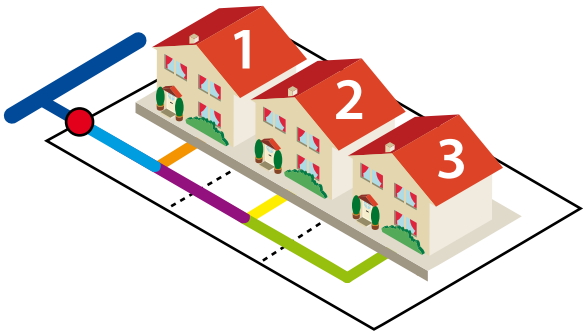
It is appreciated that it is not always obvious that there is a leak. Even when water rises to the surface, it does not necessarily mean the leak is located at this point, as water tends to find the easiest route of escape. It is important to recognise that leak detection is not an exact science and 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 detect. 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 instances, it may be necessary to carry out excavation work to narrow down the length of supply pipe 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 avoid future leakage.

## 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 would suggest that you appoint one person to represent you all. However, if you feel you are unable to approach your neighbour(s), you may wish to contact a representative or solicitor to act on your behalf.



### Key

- Street Boundary
- - - Premises Boundary
- Water Main
- Main Stop Tap
- Common Supply Pipe
- Common Supply Pipe
- Supply Pipe
- 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 leakage allows domestic customers a once-only allowance on both water and sewerage charges. Commercial customers are entitled to a once-only allowance on their sewerage charges only. **In order to qualify for an allowance, the leak/fault must have been rectified/repaired within 30 days of you becoming aware of the leak.**

Allowances may be granted based on excess charges raised on your account.

- Customers will only be offered one leakage allowance.
- Allowances are only backdated over the 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 on the part of the customer/property owner.

Full 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. 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. In the event of any work being carried out close to the expiration of the 14 day notice period please contact Leak Administration on **0845 345 1422**.

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

Please contact Leak Administration on **0845 345 1422** and we will arrange for further investigations to be undertaken by our own operatives. Should investigations conclude 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. Please note that we will only reimburse one invoice per **shared** supply. Therefore, you will need to liaise with your neighbours and instruct one contractor.

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

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

We do have a list of recognised contractors available who are able to undertake this type of work.

## 11. 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 ensure the leak is repaired, or alternatively if the property is commercial, we will fit a water meter. In doing so, you will be paying for all the excess consumption that passes through the meter.

**Should it be 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.**

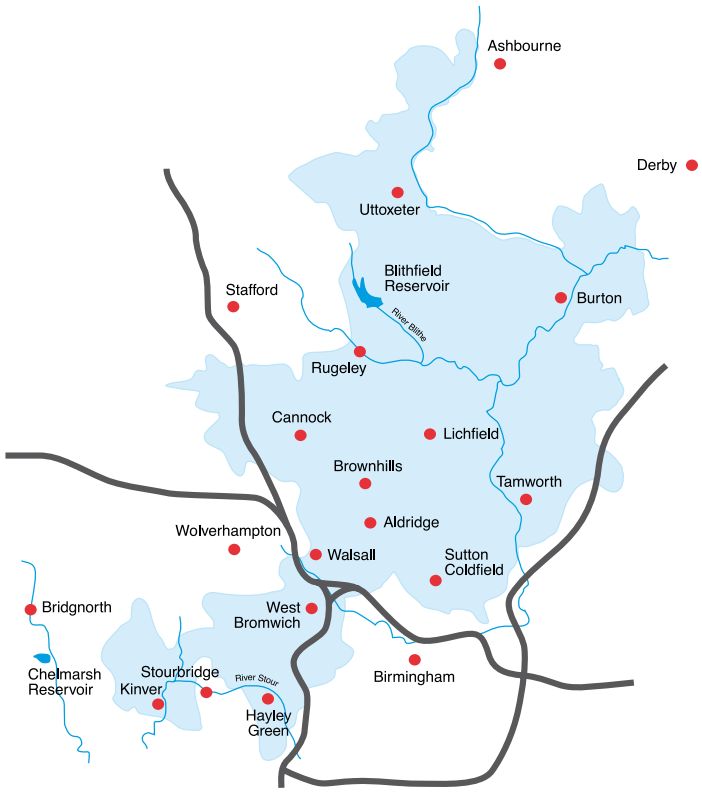
Please note that it is in your own interests to ensure any leakage is rectified, as this could potentially cause damage to your property or driveway.

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

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

**0845 345 1422**

# 13. Our supply area



## 14. Staying in touch

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

### Billing & general account enquiries

Billing & account line....**0845 60 70 456**

Difficulty paying?....**0800 09 30 610**

Water meter applications....**0845 45 67 063**

### Water issues

Problems with your  
water & water main leaks....**0800 389 10 11**

Leak Administration....**0845 345 14 22**

### Other useful South Staffs Water numbers

Minicom Textphone....**01922 61 80 25**

Check a caller is genuine....**0800 389 10 11**

Fax....**01922 61 62 39**

### Other organisations

Crimestoppers....**0800 555 111**

Severn Trent Water, for  
sewer & drainage issues....**0800 783 44 44**

### 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**

Green Lane, Walsall, West Midlands, WS2 7PD

Version 5.3 - December 2013