



South Staffs Water



Our Code of Practice for Leakage

August 2018

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This Code of Practice for Leakage sets out the responsibility in relation to leaks of South Staffs Water and of customers and property owners. It also defines how South Staffs Water will assist when a leak is found on a private supply pipe and the action that will be taken.

This Code is part of a set of Code of Practice documents which are available on our website www.south-staffs-water.co.uk. Other useful information is located there covering a range of water related topics including an A5 booklet regarding our Assisted Repair service.

Water is a precious resource and leaks from pipes can result in large water loss. We have a duty to prevent water being wasted through leaks and we strongly promote the efficient use of water.

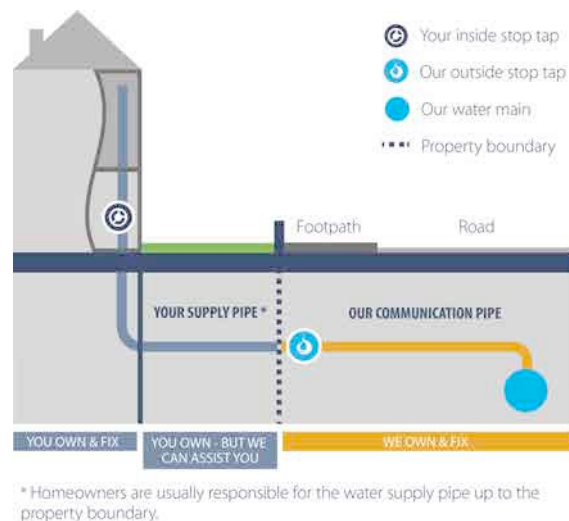
We check for leaks on our part of the water network and it's important that customers do the same for the pipework they are responsible for.

We have a legal responsibility to check for any leaks that are on a customers' pipework and ensure you've been provided with correct information in order to get them repaired as quickly as possible.

This Code of Practice for Leakage applies to household customers; metered and unmetered; including mixed-use properties.

Pipework responsibility

This example diagram shows who's typically responsible for pipework. It distinguishes between customer or property owner responsibility and the pipework that we're responsible for.



Service pipe

The service pipe connects our water main to the property.

The service pipe has two parts: communication pipe and supply pipe.

Communication pipe

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

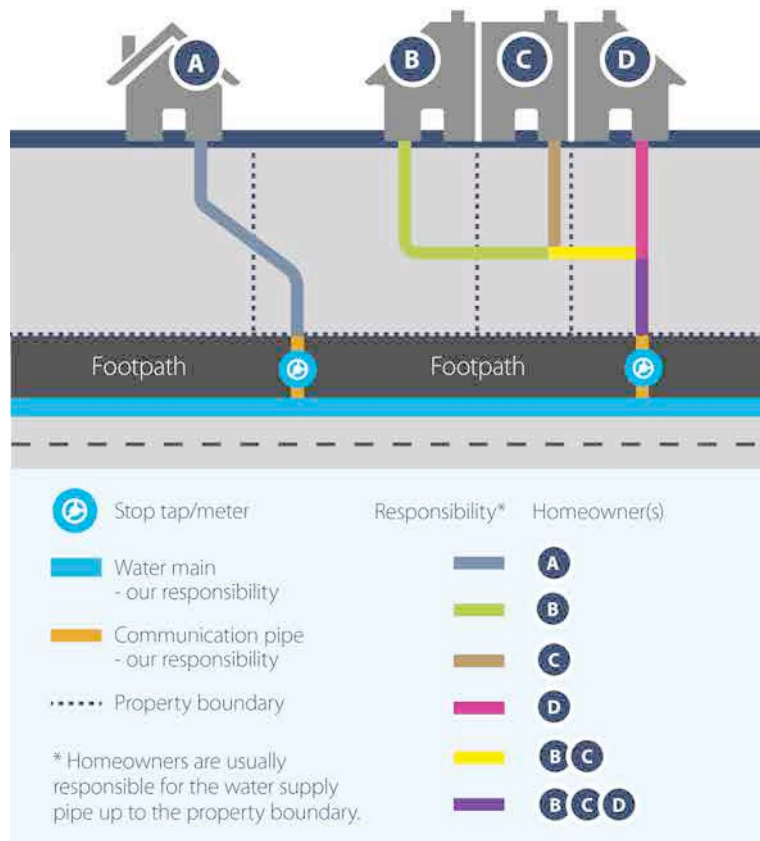
Supply pipe

The supply pipe which can be laid in the highway, on the property owner's land, or land owned by someone else is you're responsible for making sure it's fixed. If it serves more than one property it's the responsibility of all property owners. Under most circumstances it runs from the boundary to your property. The owner of the property is responsible for its repair, maintenance and replacement.

Customers or property owners are responsible for pipework and fittings inside the property as well as the supply pipe described above that runs from the boundary of the property, which is normally at the edge of the public highway, up to the property. This can be different in cases where properties have the responsibility for a supply pipe that runs beyond their property boundary and we're responsible for maintaining and repairing any pipework on the other side of the boundary.

Shared pipework responsibility

It's often the case, particularly with older properties either semi-detached or terraced that several neighbours share a water supply pipe rather than each having their own. This diagram shows a typical shared supply pipe arrangement and explains how responsibility is split between each of the properties.



If the shared pipe develops a leak, it can affect the water pressure for all homes in the row; so it's in everyone's interest to get it fixed as soon as possible.

If the leak is on a section of customer pipe that's been obstructed (for example, by an extension or outbuilding) in contravention of the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999, then the customer or property owner must remove any obstacles so that the repair can be done.

Assisted leak repair service - we want to help

As previously described, the supply pipe is your responsibility to repair – however, we want to help out where we can.

We offer an assisted leak repair service to help you to fix the leak as quickly as possible. We'll visit your property, identify if there's a leak and get back in touch to let you know who's responsible for the repair. We can provide further assistance to help get the leak repaired quickly; taking away the

uncertainty that can be felt when faced with this sort of problem. We can point you in the right direction when you're looking for a reputable plumber.

It's really important to note that this service isn't to help deal with emergencies and any visits or repairs will be done in normal working hours, which are between the hours of 8.00am and 4.00pm.

In some cases we may be able to offer financial assistance to help get the leak fixed.

How the service works

The service is available for domestic properties and doesn't apply to businesses

- We aim to investigate and advise you within 5 working days of when we'll be able to do the repair
- If you feel that the repair is an emergency (for example, it's causing damage to property) then we advise you to contact a ground worker or plumber to carry out the work. This is at your own cost. We always recommend that an approved plumber is used for repairs to internal or external leaks or an approved ground worker who does repairs to external leaks only. Visit www.wras.co.uk, simply enter your postcode and then search either ground worker, plumbers or visit www.watersafe.org.uk to search for a water industry approved plumber. A WaterSafe recognised plumber is a qualified professional plumber who is employed by a business and is a member of one or more Approved Contractors' Schemes. Each of the schemes is either operated by a water company or appointed by the Secretary of State
- If your supply pipe runs under your house, conservatory or any other permanent structure, for example sheds or a wall, we may not be able to do the repair if one of our own direct teams were carrying out the repair. In these circumstances, you'll need to contact a private plumber or builder. We'll be able to help you get in touch with someone who can help
- If one of our own direct teams or appointed contractors are doing the repair we may have to do some digging in your driveway, yard or garden – so please be prepared for some disruption. Any affected areas will normally be filled back in with the ground that has been removed or made safe usually by leaving a board or barriers across the hole. You'll need to permanently restore any affected areas at your own cost within 15 working days of the repair to allow us to collect the board/barriers. Where we have to dig out turf, we'll relay the original turf if possible. If there are bushes or trees over or around where the repair needs to be done, we'll need you to remove them before we start and we're not responsible for replanting or landscaping garden areas after the work. We do recommend upgrading rather than repairing and we know from experience newly fitted supply pipes give on average another 30 years trouble free service and an old pipe can spring another leak somewhere else. The cost may or may not be greater – all situations are different and as part of our service, the approved contractor we put you in touch with will be happy to talk through the options and associated costs with you. The choice of who carries out the work is down to yourself. You may decide to do it yourself. In some instances we'll contribute up to £300 if you have the whole supply pipe replaced and the work is done in line with The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations – See

www.wras.co.uk. You'll also need to send us the invoices and we'll be able to provide you with more detail about this. Remember replacing the pipe will provide longer term reassurance.

- If you live in a rented property it's your landlord's responsibility to get the repair done. Again, as previously described, we always recommend that an approved plumber or ground worker does the work
- This service is applied to the property not to the customer. So to qualify, there can't have been a previous free repair or contribution made by us at the property since 1997

Conditions of the assisted repair service

- The customer agrees and accepts that all work is completed under the conditions of the assisted repair scheme
- The customer accepts that if our direct teams complete a repair under this service we'll only complete a repair on the private underground pipework in line with these conditions. We aren't obliged to repair or alter any pipework or fittings, in particular it should be noted that internal private pipework is excluded
- As we're not responsible for any leaks on private pipework, including the supply pipe, we're not responsible for any loss, damage or any associated costs or expenses resulting from any escaped water from the supply pipe or fittings at the property
- Finding the leak is part of the assisted repair service and either we or our appointed contractors will do that at the time of the repair. We use a range of methods to do this, including the use of listening equipment
- It's important to note that it's not always possible to pinpoint leaks using listening equipment alone. Sometimes we need to use specialist equipment to trace the exact location of the leak
- The location of the break in the pipe isn't always in the place where the water is seen rising to the surface
- We don't offer a free leak tracing service for customers who use their insurance policies to have leaks fixed or are using contractors to do the repair for them
- For metered properties, a 'once only' leakage allowance is also available dependant on the leak or fault being repaired or rectified. We'll allow a maximum of 30 days for work to be done in order to qualify for an allowance
- We're unable to guarantee that once the repair is done, the existing supply pipe will be free from further defects or leaks. If any further associated problems occur financial assistance may not be available. We'll continue to provide an assisted repair service and support with getting the repair done at your cost
- If you have a leak and you don't arrange within 30 days to have it fixed, we'll issue a legal notice to you called a Defective Fittings Notice. If after a further 30 days you've not fixed the leak we may decide to do a compulsory repair of your pipework and send you an invoice for the cost of doing the work

Landlords and tenants

Landlords

Landlords are responsible for repairing leaks on pipework and fittings inside the property as well as on the supply pipe as previously described.

Tenants

To help make sure leaks are repaired as quickly as possible, we urge tenants to pass on any information they receive about a leak to their landlord as soon as they can.

Leasehold properties

If the property you live in is leasehold, you'll need to check the leasehold agreement to find out who has responsibility for repair and maintenance of the pipework and let us know. Otherwise a bill may be sent to the property owner for any work that's done.

If you have a leak and the person responsible for maintaining the supply pipe doesn't arrange within 30 days to have it fixed, we'll issue a legal notice to them called a Defective Fittings Notice. If after a further 30 days the leak hasn't been fixed we may decide to do a compulsory repair of your pipework and send an invoice for the cost of doing the work to the person responsible for maintaining the supply pipe.

Spotting leaks

It's important that customers check for leaks on pipework they're responsible for.

We check for leaks on our part of the water network and we also need your help to spot leaks that appear on pipework that we're responsible for. Some leaks may not be noticed easily - damp areas on the ground in dry weather or lush vegetation during hot weather can be signs of a leak.

If you spot a leak in the road or pathway please check our website to see if it's been reported www.south-staffs-water.co.uk or call us on **0800 243 352** to report it.

Metered customers

If you have a water meter you may also notice unusually high meter readings and you may be paying for water that's being lost. It's advisable to take readings on a monthly basis to see if you have a leak. If you think you might have a leak, the checks below can help to confirm either way. We can advise you.

When a meter is fitted as part of our service, we'll check for any leaks that may be present on your supply pipe free of charge. If we do find a leak, it's your responsibility to ensure it's repaired. If we find we can repair it without doing any more digging, we'll fix it at our cost whilst we're there. If further digging is needed, you may have to pay for the work. We'll explain your options and how we can assist you. If you're responsible for fixing the leak and it's not done, we're entitled to charge you for any subsequent loss of water.

If we notice a significant increase in consumption during our normal meter reading process, we'll let you know. To avoid any shocks, we advise our customers to monitor their consumption monthly.

Using your water meter to check for leaks

Water charges are based on per cubic metre of water used. On your meter the black numbers indicate the cubic metres used and the red numbers indicate the fractions of cubic metres. To check for any leaks on pipework after the meter:

- Turn off all taps and ensure no appliances etc. that need water are in use e.g. dishwashers, toilets, washing machines
- Read the meter (including the red digits)
- Don't use any water for at least an hour after taking the reading
- Read the meter again
- If the second reading is higher than the first there may be a leak. Call us on **0800 389 1011**, we'll give you some advice and if needed we'll send a technician to help further

Leakage allowances

Metered properties

- Any water that leaks from your supply pipe is recorded through your meter, so you'll be billed for it
- We may consider granting an allowance to cover the cost of the extra water that's been lost, as long as the work to repair the leak is done within 30 days
- The allowance is based on refunding the cost of the additional water that has been measured through the meter due to the leak, compared to past consumption
- Where there's no record of past consumption, the adjustment is based on typical usage for a property of a similar type. It may be possible to adjust this again if your subsequent actual usage is significantly different
- The leakage allowance is usually applied to one billing period only. If the excess water didn't drain into a public sewer, we'll grant a 100% allowance on excess sewerage charges for the same period
- To qualify, you must submit your claim within 12 months of any work being done
- You'll be advised of any adjustment within 10 working days of us receiving a claim
- If work to repair the leak is delayed we'll reduce the allowance to a maximum of 50%. We won't make any adjustment where the leak has been caused through negligence of the customer/property owner
- We won't be responsible for any loss, damage or any associated costs or expenses resulting from any escaped water from the supply pipe or fittings at the property.
- Whether you're a Cambridge Water customer or a South Staffs Water customer please visit **www.south-staffs-water.co.uk** to request a claim form

Unmetered properties

If you don't have a water meter, a leak from your supply pipe has no impact on your bill, so a leak allowance isn't granted

Saving water

There are many easy ways to save water in the home. Our handy tips will have you saving water, and money in no time. Visit our website for more information and to claim your free water saving devices.

Complaints

If you're unhappy about any aspect of our service we want to know so we can put it right as quickly as possible. Please call us in the first instance on **0345 60 70 456** and a member of our team, we will aim to resolve your issue at the time of your call. Information about our customer complaints procedure can be found on our website: **www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/contact-us/making-a-complaint**