



South Staffs Water

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Our Code of Practice for
Household Customers 2023/24

The water services we provide



January 2023

Our Code of Practice for Household

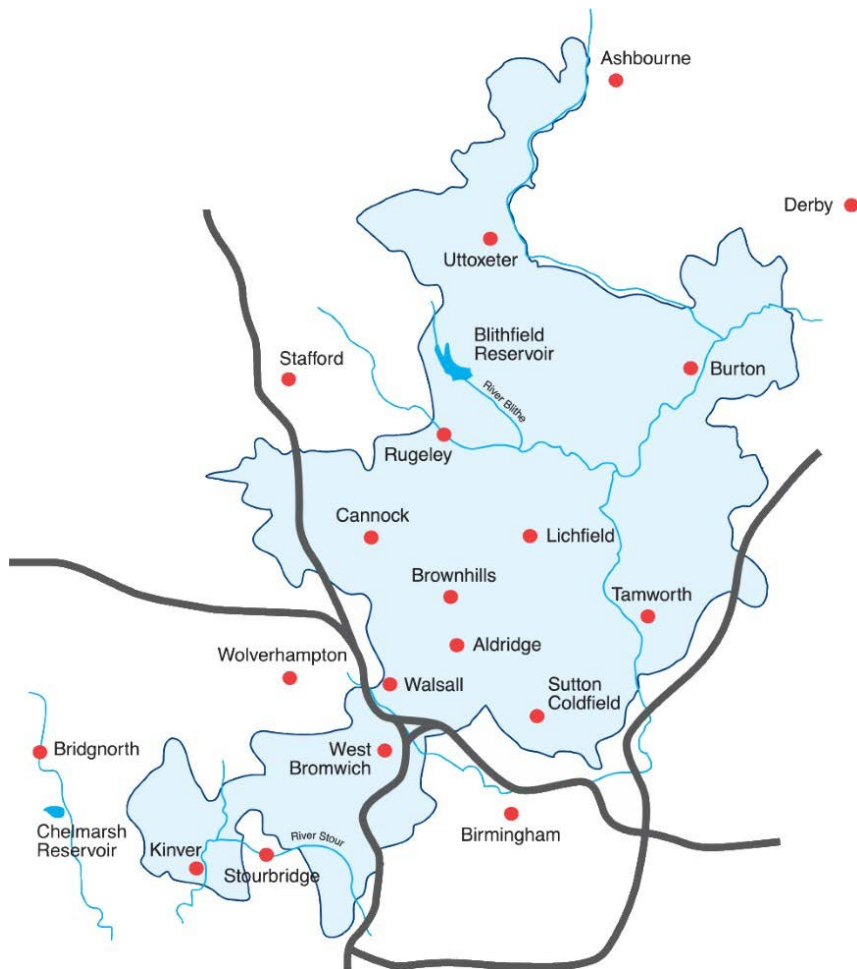
Customers Introduction

The Code

This Code of Practice is for household customers and gives information on the services we provide, the terms and conditions on which they are offered and how our customers can find the help and advice they need. It does not establish a contractual relationship between South Staffs Water Plc and any of its customers.

South Staffs Water

South Staffs Water provides clean drinking water to a population of 1.3 million customers through a network of 6000km of water mains. Almost half of our water is sourced from boreholes in the ground and the remainder from two major treatment works one of which takes water from the River Severn. We have excellent service standards, have very efficient operations and our bills to customers are amongst the lowest in the country. Our area of supply incorporates the Black Country conurbation and stretches up to Burton and Uttoxeter. We do not supply sewerage services; our customers receive these from Severn Trent Water Ltd.



We provide an essential public service to our customers, enabling them to go about their daily lives while also protecting the environment that they rely on and enjoy.

How we perform as a business is important to our customers and other stakeholders, including our regulators and our owners. Because we want to demonstrate that we are accountable for our performance, we have developed a number of outcomes for the business. These are the promises we have made to our customers on the services they want us to deliver.

To ensure we maintain our customers' trust in us, it is vital that we deliver these promises. So we have developed 30 performance commitments, which are the areas our customers have said they want to hold us to account. We have worked with customers to set targets for each of these commitments so they can measure our performance and see how we are doing.



Further details of the measures that sit underneath these outcomes can be found on our website www.south-staffs-water.co.uk.

Throughout this Code there are references to useful information that can be found on our website.

If you do not have access to the internet, please call us for any information you require and we will be happy to help.

The water services we provide

Water quality

The Water Industry Act 1991 places duties on us to supply wholesome water for domestic purposes which conform to standards laid down in The Water Supply Regulations 2010. These Regulations are tougher than the EU's Water Quality Directive on which they are based.

These duties are enforceable by the Secretary of State and any contravention may render us liable to prosecution by him or the Chief Inspector of Drinking Water.

Our top priority is to provide high quality drinking water to our customers. Each year we complete around 80,000 tests on water samples taken from treatment works, reservoirs and at randomly selected homes across the region. We are required to maintain records of these tests for each water quality supply zone. A water quality supply zone is an area in which no more than 100,000 people live. Generally our water supply is described as 'moderately hard'. We appreciate that the water hardness can produce limited scale on water appliances. However, it is generally accepted that harder water does have beneficial health effects. For further information on water quality please visit www.south-staffs-water.co.uk

If you believe that your water has made you ill, contact us on 0800 389 10 11 straight away. We aim to be at the premises no later than four hours after receiving any complaint that indicates a threat to public health. If necessary we will arrange an alternative supply.

If at any time we believe that your water supply is unfit to drink we will tell you not to use the water or to boil it before you use it for drinking or cooking. We will do this as quickly as possible, via our website, by writing to you, or by whichever method allows us to broadcast the information as quickly as possible. We will also provide appropriate advice.

If we take a sample of water for analysis we will confirm the results to you by telephone within 10 working days. In the event that you remain dissatisfied with the quality of your drinking water, independent advice may be obtained from your local Environmental Health Department. It is a general duty of Environmental Health Officers to keep themselves informed as to the wholesomeness and sufficiency of water supplied in the area for which they are responsible.

Quantity

We must provide you with enough water for normal domestic purposes such as drinking, washing, cooking, central heating and sanitation. The continuity of supply becomes more difficult to maintain when resources are scarce, such as during a drought, and when exceptional peak demands occur due to excessive garden watering. We are investing to improve our water sources and our distribution system so that we can keep restrictions to a minimum. However, peak hourly demands caused by garden watering are growing at a rate in excess of the general demand for water. This cannot be economically sustained.

Therefore customers who wish to use a sprinkler or other unattended watering device must have a meter fitted so that they are charged for the volume of water they use. Even so, restrictions, including hosepipe bans, on non-essential uses of water may occasionally be necessary. Our aim is that they should be imposed on average no more than once in 40 years.

If a supply for domestic purposes is interrupted or cut off as a result of emergency restrictions a payment per day or part day can be claimed. The maximum entitlement is equal to our average household bill for the preceding year. There would be no entitlement if the circumstances were so exceptional that it would have been unreasonable for us to have avoided the interruption or cut off. In the unfortunate circumstances of this happening we will provide alternative sources, such as standpipes or water bowsers. In addition we will advise you when normal service has resumed.

Every five years all water companies are required to prepare long-term plans for managing the demand for water and supply of resources as part of business planning. This is a statutory requirement outlined in the Water Act 2003. The plans give a detailed assessment of how social, economic and political pressures may change the way water is used over the next 25 years and how factors, such as climate change and environmental pressures may change the amount of water that is available to meet that demand.

The most cost beneficial (including social and environmental costs and benefits) options are identified for meeting any shortfall between supply and demand including leakage reduction, metering, water efficiency and resource development. Leakage management, metering and water efficiency are all aspects of our normal operations and service.

Pressure

We must supply water for household purposes at a pressure which will ensure water reaches the top-most storey of every building within our supply area, unless the building is at such a height that water will not flow to it by gravitation from our supply reservoir or tank.

In practice, this means a pressure level of 10 metres at a flow of 9 litres per minute at the boundary stop tap - this equates to filling a 1 gallon container in just over half a minute. However, we will in most cases ensure higher pressure than this.

If you are affected by low pressure of less than seven metres static head on two occasions each lasting one hour or more in a period of 28 consecutive days you may claim a payment once in any year. See section 11.4 for more details.

Pressure and flow rates in your home can be affected by a number of factors:

- (i) Peak demand conditions;
- (ii) The height of the property above the water main and its height relevant to the supply reservoir or local booster pump etc;
- (iii) The condition of the supply pipe connecting your house to the boundary of your property;
- (iv) Whether the property shares a supply pipe with other properties.
- (v) Internal plumbing

Please note that (iii), (iv) and (v) are your responsibility. The cost of correcting such problems rests with you. However, in the case of (iv) responsibility will be shared with the owners of other properties.

If you think you have a problem with your mains water pressure please contact us on 0800 389 10 11. If we cannot resolve the issue on the phone we will arrange to visit you, free of charge to investigate the problem.

Separation of supplies

If you are on a shared water supply pipe that feeds other properties you can apply to us to have a separate supply that will just feed your property. You will need to complete our Application Form for Separation or Replacement Water Connection which you can access from the Developer Services section of our website.

Upon completion of the required information we will provide you with the following :-

- A quotation for the cost of the work required to be undertaken by us to connect you.
- A copy of our mains records indicating approximately where we will lay our pipes to.

For us to be able to connect you to a separate supply you will need to lay a new pipe from your property to the boundary of the public highway. We will need to inspect your new pipe to make sure that it has been laid in accordance with the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999.

You will also need to make arrangements with your plumber to identify where you will need to disconnect your property from the existing shared supply when your new supply is connected by us. This disconnection is required to be done in accordance with the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999.

We will only make a connection when:-

- You have paid the quote
- The supply pipe has passed our inspection.

Replacement supplies

If you already have a separate supply but are replacing it because it is old or has started to leak you will need to complete our Application Form for Separation or Replacement Water Connection which you can access from the Developer Services section of our website.

For us to be able to connect to your new pipe you will need to lay a new pipe from your property to the boundary of the public highway. It will be your responsibility to ensure it is completed. We will then need to inspect your new pipe to make sure that it has been laid in accordance with the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999.

We will only make a connection when:-

- You have paid the quote
- The supply pipe has passed our inspection.

When we are undertaking the replacement of an existing supply we also need to arrange to disconnect the old supply that feeds your property at the water main. We expect to do this at the same time that we make the new connection. So, we will require you to lay your new supply to terminate at the boundary in line with the old supply.

If you intend to lay your new water supply in a different position to the existing one you must be aware that this will add extra cost to the job as it means we will have to make two separate excavations in the public highway which you will have to pay for.

Please look at the relevant information on the Developer Services section of our website or contact our Developer Services team who can advise you further.

Interruptions to supply

Our primary aim is to deliver to you a constant supply of high quality water. However, occasionally your supply may be interrupted, perhaps to carry out planned work or if there is a burst water main.

Planned work

There's some work we carry out which requires only short interruptions to your supply of less than 1 hour. You'll not normally receive written warning of these interruptions. If we believe the interruption will be over four hours, we'll provide at least 48 hours' notice and let you know what time the supply will be restored.

If the supply is off for more than four hours, and we have failed to give at least 48 hours' notice, you may be eligible for a payment under the terms of our Guaranteed Standards Scheme.

Unplanned work

After an emergency or unplanned interruption, we'll take all reasonable steps to notify affected customers:

- That the supply has been interrupted or cut off
- Where alternative supplies can be obtained
- The time by which we plan to restore the supply
- A phone number to obtain further information

Restoration of supplies

If your water supply does get interrupted we are committed to restoring it as soon as possible. We'll restore supplies within 48 hours if the interruption to the supply was on a large, strategic main, or within 12 hours for smaller leaks or bursts.

If the incident is serious you can keep track of updates and find out about alternative water supplies by visiting our website or checking local media.

If you would like to report an emergency or a burst main please contact us on 0800 389 1011.

Emergency water supply

Sometimes we may need to turn your water off, or we may have an incident caused by a burst main. If you have a medical condition, which needs a constant supply of water, such as a kidney patient on home dialysis, we will do our best to get water to you.

If you have children under 5 years of age at the address, or if you have physical or medical conditions that would make it difficult obtaining alternative water supplies, please register your details so we can identify you in these incidences as we may be able to deliver bottled water directly to you.

To give you the best possible service we keep a confidential register of customers who have individual needs. The register means our staff know how best to assist you. If you would like to register for our Priority Services Register please call us on 0345 60 70 456 or visit our website www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/psr

Discoloured water

We ensure that, as far as is reasonably practicable, no water is supplied that causes loss or damage due to discolouration. Discolouration can occur when work is taking place in the area, for example repairs to a burst main or moving water to supply a different area. We advise you to run a cold tap in your property (preferably the kitchen tap) for 20-30 minutes or until the water runs clear, whichever is sooner. If your water does not return to a clear status or you are still concerned, please contact us on 0800 389 10 11.

Please note: If damage is caused as a result of the water supplied, you may be eligible for a payment under the terms of our Customer Promise.

Water efficiency

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

www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/save-water



- 1 Take a shower instead of a bath
- 2 Install a 'save-a-flush' device if you have a single flush toilet
- 3 Only run your washing machine and dishwasher with a full load
- 4 Turn off the tap while brushing your teeth

Water Regulations

The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 are national requirements for the design, installation, composition and maintenance of water fittings and water-using appliances.

These regulations are designed to protect consumers and the environment from poor water quality, unnecessary waste, misuse and the contamination of wholesome water supplies.

All water systems must comply with the regulations and they should be referred to when carrying out plumbing works.

We are responsible for inspecting water systems to ensure they comply with the water fittings regulations and, if necessary, will use legal powers of entry to inspect for breaches.

Where do they apply?

Since 1999, all plumbing systems, water fittings and equipment supplied, or to be supplied, with water from the public water supply are covered under these regulations in England and Wales. This applies to plumbing systems in all types of premises. A plumbing system includes the premise's underground supply pipe from the point connecting it to the water main, to where the water is drawn off for use.

They also apply to plumbing systems that use a private water supply and have a mains backup provided by us.

Where do they not apply?

They do not apply where a property uses a private water supply and does not have a supply of water from us. However, it is good plumbing practice to follow the requirements of the regulations.

Who has to comply?

Owners and occupiers of premises and anyone who installs plumbing systems or water fittings have the legal duty to ensure that the systems satisfy the regulations.

In most cases, advanced notice must be given for proposed installations, so architects, building developers and plumbers have to follow the regulations on behalf of future owners or occupiers.

How can I ensure the plumbing work at my property meets these standards?

While many simple plumbing jobs can be safely tackled by someone with competent DIY skills, more complex tasks should be completed by a professionally qualified plumber.

We always recommend that a registered plumber is used for repairs to internal or external leaks or a registered groundworker who does repairs to external leaks only.

To find a plumber or groundworker you can visit www.wras.org.uk, enter your postcode or visit www.watersafe.org.uk. A WaterSafe recognised plumber is a qualified professional plumber who is a member of one or more Approved Contractors' Schemes. Approved plumbers or groundworkers will also have public liability insurance cover. Each of the schemes is either operated by a water company or appointed by the Secretary of State.

We, along with the majority of water companies, subscribe to the Water Industry Approved Plumber Scheme (WIAPS). This scheme is run by the Water Regulations Advisory Service (WRAS) on behalf of water companies.

You can also visit our website, www.south-staffs-water.co.uk or contact us on 01922 638282 and ask to speak to a member of the Water Regulations team.

Whether you decide to appoint an approved plumber, or undertake DIY, it is advisable to use only materials that have been approved to be in contact with drinking water.

WRAS check and endorse product compliance to ensure that they do not affect drinking water quality. These products carry the WRAS logo.



Who is responsible for enforcing the regulations?

The regulator is the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. View the Defra website for more details.

The Government requires water suppliers to enforce the regulations within their area of supply. We may undertake inspections of new and existing installations to check that the regulations are being met.

Where breaches of the regulations are found, we'll require them to be remedied as soon as practicable. Where breaches pose a risk to health, the water supply to the premises may be disconnected immediately to protect the health of occupants or others fed from the same public supply. It is a criminal offence to breach the regulations and offenders may face prosecution and a fine of up to £1,000 per offence.

Should you require independent advice please contact the Drinking Water Inspectorate or the Health Protection Agency. It is a criminal offence to breach the Regulations and offenders may face prosecution.

Key telephone numbers and addresses

South Staffs Water

Green Lane
Walsall WS2
7PD

www.south-staffs-water.co.uk

CUSTOMER ENQUIRY NUMBERS

Billing enquiries: 0345 60 70 456

Difficulty paying: 0800 09 30 610

Request a Water Meter: 0345 60 70 456

Supply problems & emergencies: 0800 389 10 11

Report a leak: 0800 389 10 11

SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE SERVICES

Severn Trent Water

2 St John's Street, Coventry, CV1 2LZ

0800 783 4444

Website: www.stwater.co.uk

CCW the voice for water consumers

Customers are represented in the water industry by an independent body called the CCW.

23 Stephenson Street

Birmingham

B2 4BH

Telephone: 0300 034 2222

Email: enquiries@ccwater.org.uk

Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat)

Centre City Tower

7 Hill Street

Birmingham

B5 4UA

Telephone: 0121 644 7500

Email: enquiries@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.ofwat.gov.uk