

# Customer Side Leakage

## 1. Introduction

This Code of Practice has been approved by the Water Services Regulation Authority - Ofwat. Ofwat is the economic regulator of the water and sewerage industry in England and Wales. The code explains what you should do when you have a leak on your water supply and gives some useful advice about what we can do to help you.

Water is a valuable resource. A growing population and increased demand for water means we all share a responsibility for using it wisely. We have an extensive programme of leak detection and pipe repair to prevent water being wasted.

If you think your pipe is leaking, please call us on **08451 482 909**. We will arrange an inspection and offer help and advice to get the leak fixed. It is important that all leaks are repaired as quickly as possible and sections 3 to 6 contain important information about this.

If your water supply is metered, you can monitor your water usage as well as check for leaking pipes. As you pay for your water and wastewater services according to the volume of water that passes through the meter, we will also consider adjusting your water charges, subject to certain conditions. Sections 2 and 7 to 9 explain in more detail.

You have a legal duty to repair leaks on your pipework under Section 75 of the Water Industry Act 1991. We may take action if we find that water is being wasted at your property. In such circumstances, legal notices are served requiring that the leak be repaired. If the repair is not made within the prescribed timescale, we have the right to complete the work ourselves and recover reasonable costs from you. In extreme circumstances, for example if a property is empty and a property owner has not registered an account with us or if there is a danger to public health and safety, we may be within our rights to turn off the supply.

While this leaflet applies specifically to domestic customers, much of the information is also relevant for non-domestic customers. For further information about our water and wastewater services, please see our Customer Code of Practice or call us on 08451 482 909.

## 2. Installing the meter

The meters that we fit remain our property and we maintain them.

We select the location of your meter in line with the regulations made by the Government. There are normally three possible locations:

- Outside, adjacent to the property wall, preferably in the soft part of the garden
- Outside, at the boundary with the road or footpath
- Inside the property.

We prefer meters to be fitted outside – normally in the footpath next to the stopvalve at the property boundary. As it is not always possible to fit meters outside, sometimes they may have to be inside the house (usually under the kitchen sink) or in an outhouse or garage.

Meters are normally fitted free of charge. However, if you are unhappy with where we intend to fit a new meter we will, if practicable, install the meter in your preferred location but we will ask you to pay any additional costs this may incur unless the request is due to a type of disability which may restrict you from reading the meter. If you already have a meter and want us to relocate it, we will expect you to pay the cost of this work. Please phone us on 08451 482 909 to discuss either of these matters further.

Once a meter has been installed and brought into use, you may not move back to an unmetered basis of charge. The only exception is for customers who have applied for a meter under our optional scheme. If you have opted to have a meter, you have the legal right to revert back to an unmetered charge basis within the first year following installation. You will find more information about this in both our Charges Scheme and our Customer Code of Practice.

From experience we know that water can often escape undetected from leaking underground pipes. Therefore, when we first install an external meter we check for leakage at the time. If we do find a leak while fitting the meter, it may be possible to repair the pipe there and then if the leak is within the excavated area. We do not charge for this type of repair.

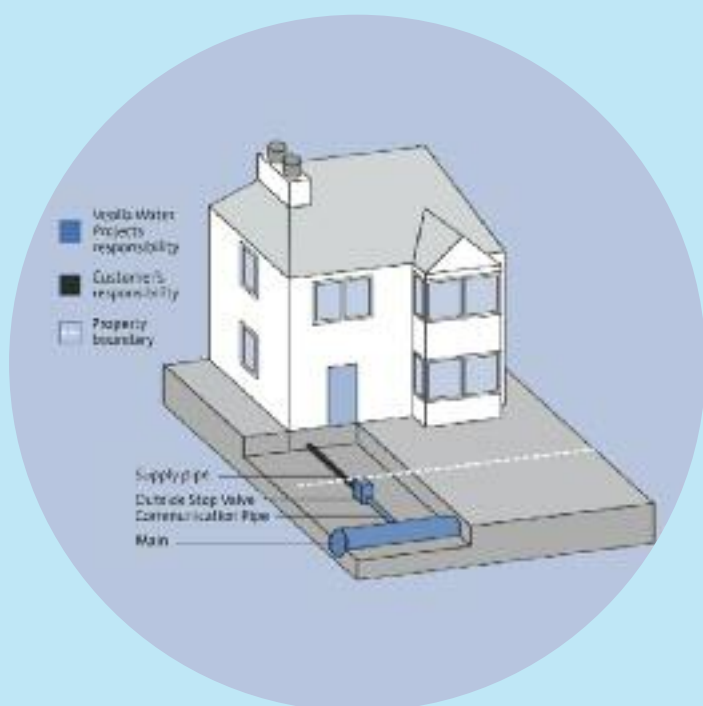
However, if there appears to be a leak further along the pipe, we will tell you about it and ask you to arrange for it to be repaired. This could also involve excavation to expose the leaking pipe. As explained below, leaks from your supply pipe are your responsibility to repair. You may use our free repair/subsidised replacement service if appropriate or obtain the services of a private plumber if you wish. See the Repair Service section.

### 3. Responsibilities – whose pipe is it anyway?

We look after our own pipes and repair any leaks we find on them. In the majority of cases we will do this as soon as possible, but we will need to gain permission from the local council before we dig up the footpath or road.

As a general rule, you are responsible for the part of the supply pipe that runs from the edge of your property, at the boundary, into your home and for all internal pipes and fittings. This is illustrated in the diagram below. In our day-to-day leakage detection operations we may find leaks on our customers' pipes. If we find a leak on your pipe we will tell you about it, and offer you advice on how to get it repaired. Our leakage detection service is free for all domestic customers. It is not always possible to pinpoint the exact position of a leak, particularly where the pipe runs beneath a building but, during his visit, our technician will advise you which section of pipework is leaking.

Sometimes two or more properties share a single water supply. If you have a shared arrangement like this and would like help or advice about responsibility for maintenance and repair please phone us on 08451 482 909 and we'll arrange for a technician to make a visit and explain what we can do to help.



### 4. Detecting leaks

To help customers conserve water and help reduce leakage, we offer domestic customers (metered and unmetered) a free leakage detection service. If you think you have a leak on your supply pipe, call us on 08451 482 909. We can then arrange for a technician to visit your property and investigate any possible leakage. We will of course keep you informed throughout this process.

### 5. Repair service

Customers are responsible for repairing leaks on their supply pipe. In order to limit any loss of water we can offer the owner/occupier one free repair with a guarantee of three years (or subsidised replacement service) subject to certain terms and conditions. We will also require written agreement before we can start. If you are a tenant you will need to contact your landlord to get the leak repaired and, if you pay your water charges direct to Veolia Water, you may be eligible for a leak allowance, as referred to in sections 8 and 9.

As explained above, you have a legal duty to repair leaks on your pipes. If we find a leak at your property, we will serve a legal notice explaining that you have 14 days to either accept our free repair/replacement offer (where appropriate) or to arrange to have the leak repaired yourself. If no action is taken within 14 days, we will send you a second notice. However, if no action has been taken after 28 days, we will send a third and final notice explaining that we have to make a repair in accordance with our statutory duties. At this stage our repair/replacement offer will be removed. We will also look to recover reasonable costs in these circumstances.

Our repair/replacement service applies to any external underground pipe up to a length of 50 metres, between the stopvalve in the footpath and the wall of the property. We will not repair leaking pipes underneath homes or outbuildings.

Our repair/replacement service offer applies per owner/occupier per property. This means that if you have recently moved into a property and there has been a repair made previously, you will be eligible for a further free repair or a subsidised replacement.

Whilst we do offer one repair at no cost to you, we have found that when a pipe is in a poor condition it is sensible to replace the entire length rather than repair it, as it is likely to leak again. If your pipe is in poor condition, we will explain the options available to you. Depending upon the length of the pipe, and whether this is the first or subsequent leak at your property, we will consider making a contribution of up to £300 towards the cost of replacing the pipe.

We will always try to minimise disruption by reinstating the excavated area to a good and safe standard. We cannot, however, return all driveways or

gardens to their original condition. However, please be assured that we will discuss this with you before we start.

As the pipe belongs to you, you are not obliged to accept our offer and can arrange for your own contractor to complete this work. However, if you do not complete the repair, we have the right to do the work ourselves and recover our costs from you.

Internal leaks are not covered by our repair service and you will need a plumber or contractor to do this work. We can provide you with an up to date copy of our Approved Plumbers List if you wish. Please phone us on 08451 482 909 to request a copy of the list.

## **6. How will I know if there is a leak?**

If you get an unusually high-metered bill, it may indicate that the supply pipe is leaking. Other indicators may be reduced water pressure or flow at your kitchen tap, damp or waterlogged areas in your garden even during spells of dry weather, or noisy pipework.

Taking regular meter readings not only helps you to check your bill is correct, but will also highlight any significant and unexpected increase in your use of water. It may also indicate a possible leak.

If your water meter is fitted externally there is a simple test you can do to check for leakage:

- Turn off your stopvalve in the home (usually under the kitchen sink)
- Make sure no cisterns are filling or taps are being used
- Read the meter
- Leave the stopvalve shut and then read the meter again in half an hour
- The meter dial should not have moved, as you have been using no water.

If it has moved, there may be a leak between the meter and the stopvalve in your house.

If this happens, call us on 08451 482 909 to arrange for a technician to visit you to check for leakage and to advise you what to do next.

## **7. How do I know that my water meter is accurate?**

We only use water meters that have been checked by Trading Standards officers before they leave the factory. If you think the water meter is not accurate, please contact us and we can arrange for an independent company to test it. We normally offer one free full meter test; there is a charge of £70 for subsequent tests which will only be charged if the meter is found to be accurate. Please call 08451 482 909 to arrange a test. We will provide you with a copy of the results when the test is completed. If the meter has been giving the wrong readings we will adjust

your bill. When we work out the adjustment, we will normally assume the meter has been reading wrongly since the last time it was read. We also carry out occasional tests on meters and, based on the results, we may increase or decrease your charges as necessary. We will base any adjustments on how much water you have used in the past when the meter was working correctly.

## **8. Do I have to pay for any water lost through leakage?**

Whoever pays the water service charges for a metered supply – owner/occupier, landlord or tenant – may be eligible for a leakage allowance whether we repair the pipe or whether a private contractor is used subject to certain conditions:

- The leak must be repaired within 6 weeks of it being confirmed
- If a leak is fixed privately, evidence will be needed to show you sourced the leak and fixed it within a six week period
- The claim for an allowance must be made within 3 months of the date of repair
- An allowance will not be given if the leak was caused through negligence
- An allowance is given for the first leak whilst you occupy the property but you cannot claim for subsequent leaks
- Allowances are only considered for external pipes that are laid underground (this excludes leakage from internal fixtures and fittings).

If you do not meet the above criteria but feel there are exceptional circumstances, please write to us at the address on the back of the leaflet, and we will consider your claim on its own merits.

The leakage allowance is applied per customer per property. This means that if you are granted an allowance at your current address, it does not prevent you from claiming an allowance for your new property if you move home. Similarly, if we have replaced your water supply pipe and it leaks within the guaranteed period, we will make an additional allowance where claimed.

As soon as you tell us you have a leak, we will send you a form so that you can claim the allowance. Please call us on 08451 482 909 if you would like a form. The form should be returned to us as soon as the leak has been repaired. When it is received we will apply the allowance as soon as is reasonably practical. If the property is of 'mixed use', meaning that part of the building is used for commercial purposes and part for domestic use, for example a shop with a flat above, we regard the consumer living in the domestic property as eligible for a leakage allowance.

If the domestic property has a dedicated supply and meter, calculation of an allowance is straightforward

as it follows the guidelines set out above.

Where the leak is on a section of pipe that feeds just domestic properties within the site, we will offer a full allowance based on the total consumption through the meter. Where the leak is on the pipe delivering water to both commercial and residential areas of the site we will agree a percentage adjustment as provided by the customer. We will then calculate the total amount lost to leakage and apply the appropriate leakage allowance according to the residential/commercial split of the property affected.

## 9. How will you adjust my water charges?

If there is a leak from a metered supply to a household property, as long as the leak is fixed within six weeks of it being confirmed, we will not charge for the amount of water that has been lost through leakage. The adjustment will be based on how much water has been used in the past, with the maximum leak allowance given for two billing periods, plus the leak repair time of a maximum of six weeks. Both charges will be adjusted at the same time. If there is no record of past use, an adjustment will be made based on typical water use for a similar property. If the typical water use is significantly lower after the leak has been fixed we will consider granting a further leak allowance. Please contact us if you feel the adjustment we have made does not truly reflect the difference between the amounts of water you normally would have used and the amount recorded on your meter because of the leak. We will then review that adjustment.

Your wastewater charges are also based on the

volume of clean water supplied through the meter, so a similar adjustment will be made.

## 10. If you are unhappy with our service

### 1. If you have a complaint

If you have a complaint about us, please call us or write to us using the telephone number and address on the back of this leaflet.

### 2. If you are not satisfied with the response

Your complaint will be reviewed by our Operations Director. You can write to the Director at:

Veolia Water Projects  
PO Box 3474  
Swindon  
SN3 9AF

### 3. If you remain dissatisfied

You can contact the Consumer Council for Water, 1st Floor, Victoria Square House, Victoria Square, Birmingham, B2 4AJ.

Telephone 0121 345 1017

Local rate 08457 023 953

Fax 0121 345 1010

Email [central@ccwater.org.uk](mailto:central@ccwater.org.uk)

Office hours Mon to Fri 8.30 to 4.30

CCWater may investigate your complaint and take it up on your behalf. Normally, they will only take up your complaint if we have been given the opportunity to put things right first.

## Contact details

### Telephone

Operational and Billing Enquiries

**08451 482 909\***

Mon–Fri, 8:30am to 4:30pm

A 24 hour emergency service operates outside of these hours. Please call 08451 482 909

\*Calls may be monitored or recorded for training purposes.

### Post

Veolia Water Projects  
PO Box 3474  
Swindon  
SN3 9AF

### Email

#### Billing

[tidworthbilling@veoliawater.co.uk](mailto:tidworthbilling@veoliawater.co.uk)

#### Operational

[tidworthoperations@veoliawater.co.uk](mailto:tidworthoperations@veoliawater.co.uk)

### Website

[www.veoliawaterprojects.co.uk](http://www.veoliawaterprojects.co.uk)