

Metering your water supply



Our Codes of Practice

We operate under a licence that is granted by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. This means that there are many laws and regulations which govern what we do and these include the rights you have as a customer. Independent regulators monitor our business to ensure that we operate fairly. In addition to this we have introduced our own policies and services which go beyond our regulatory obligations.

Our Codes of Practice exist to ensure that you as a customer and we as a company enjoy a regulated relationship that benefits us all. They have been produced in consultation with the Consumer Council for Water (CCWater) and have been approved by the Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat), the water industry economic regulator. From time to time we may revise the Codes and update them to include our improvements in services to you.

This leaflet sets out our Code of Practice relating to the way we meter your water supply. Separate leaflets are available that deal with other aspects of our full company Code of Practice. These are;

- Guaranteed Service Standards
- Your water
- Leakage
- Your bill (this includes our debt code)
- What to do if you are unhappy with our service

You can get a copy by downloading it from www.stwater.co.uk or by telephoning our Customer Contact Centre on **08457 500 500**.

Nothing in our Code of Practice affects your legal rights, nor is it a contract between you and the company. Our Codes apply to both domestic and business customers.

All of the numbers you need to contact us can be found at the back of this leaflet.

Metering your water supply – Our Code of Practice

Our metering policy

We supply and fit water meters free of charge in nearly all cases (provided that it is reasonable and practical and not unreasonably expensive) as part of our efforts to be water efficient. There are some cases when we might not be able to fit a meter. If we tell you that we won't fit one you have the right to appeal to Ofwat.

If we ever have to impose a hosepipe ban to safeguard essential supplies, the ban will cover both metered and unmetered customers alike.

Many customers choose to have a water meter fitted as it can help to save you money, help to save water and help to reduce your and our carbon footprint. Some customers must have a water meter fitted because of certain circumstances.

Who has to have a meter?

If you choose to use a garden sprinkler or other automatic garden watering devices you must have a meter fitted. This is because these devices can use more water in an hour than a family of four does in two days! Plus, if you use a sprinkler during hot, dry weather, demand can soar and affect supplies to other customers.

You must also have a meter if you choose to have a swimming pool or a pond with over 10,000 litres capacity that is designed to replenish itself automatically. This is because of the amount of water needed to fill it and maintain the water level.

If you use a hand held hosepipe without a sprinkler you do not need to be metered. However, devices like a perforated hose are classified as sprinkling devices and your supply will have to be metered if you use one.

If you are a business customer you must have a meter.

If any of this applies to you (or if you aren't sure) and you don't have a meter, please contact us on our meter helpline **08457 090646**. In nearly all circumstances we will fit the meter for free.

I don't need a meter, can I still choose to have one?

Yes! Many customers benefit by having their bills based on the actual volume of water they use. For instance, if you live in a house with a high Rateable Value your unmetered charges will be relatively high. If only a couple of you live there or if you use an average or less than average amount of water you could reduce your water bills. (Please note that you will also be charged for billing and reading the meter.)

We can offer you advice to help you decide if a meter is the best option for you. If you want a meter we will supply and fit one free provided that it is reasonable, practical and not unreasonably expensive.

Simply contact our meter helpline on **08457 090646** for more information.



If I have a meter fitted but don't benefit can I go back to an unmetered charge?

You have the right to go back to an unmetered charge if you tell us that you want to. You must do this within 12 months of your meter being installed or within 30 days of your second bill. At least one of your bills will be based on an actual meter reading so that you can work out how much water you have used and whether the meter has benefitted you or not.

If you paid for your meter to be installed before 1 April 2001 you may be able to revert to an unmetered charge. You can do this if ALL of the following apply:

- Your property doesn't have a swimming pool or an automatic watering device.
- Your property had a valid Rateable Value as at 31 March 1990.
- Your property has not been substantially altered since the Rateable Value was set.
- Your property is a domestic household.

If your property is a business or if we have fitted your meter under our compulsory metering scheme you can't go back to an unmetered charge under any circumstances.

If we both agree that you are going to go back to an unmeasured charge we will agree a date when this will start with you. The meter will need to stay where it is but rest assured we won't bill you from it.

How can I update an estimated reading?

If you receive a bill based on an estimated reading you can take a meter reading yourself and tell us what the actual reading is. We will then send you a new bill. This can stop future estimated readings from being too high or too low and will make sure that you don't get a surprise when you receive a bill based on an actual meter reading.

Who does the meter belong to?

In legal terms your water meter is our property and you mustn't remove it or instruct anyone to remove it for you (e.g. a plumber) under any circumstances. This is because it is a contravention of the Water Act (as stated in section 175 of the Water Industry Act 1991) and can be a criminal offence to interfere with, wilfully damage or remove the meter. If you are convicted of doing these things you could face a large fine.

If you do remove the meter and you refuse to have it refitted we can fit an external meter at your property. If we had to do this, you would be liable for the cost.

Where will the meter be?

There are normally three possible places that the government regulations allow us to fit a water meter:

- 1 Inside your property with an external touchpad that we can read (which is our preferred location to fit a meter)
- 2 Outside your property next to the stop tap, near the property boundary
- 3 Outside your property adjacent to the property wall

The position of the meter doesn't affect who owns the supply pipe. You can find more information on the pipes you are responsible for on page 11

When we arrive, we will tell you where we will fit the meter. If you want it to be in a different place you may have to pay the extra costs. If there are any costs associated with this we will always confirm them with you before we do the work.

If your property is more than 50 metres from our main we must install the meter at the start of your supply pipe (usually at the highway boundary). If you are unhappy about where your meter is fitted you do have the right to appeal to Ofwat.

What happens if, at a later date, I want to move the water meter?

If you want to have your meter moved, please contact us and we will arrange for someone to visit you and carry out a survey. If you decide to go ahead with having the meter moved you will be charged for the cost of moving it unless you have specific special needs or need special assistance. We will confirm any costs associated with moving the meter before we do the work.

How can I be sure that the meter is accurate?

Your meter is approved for accuracy by the National Weights and Measures Laboratory as well as the manufacturers before it leaves the factory. We will show you how to read the meter when we install it.

You can ask us to test your meter if you think it might be inaccurate. The meter will be sent away for testing on calibrated equipment independently of Severn Trent Water. If it is confirmed to be inaccurate we won't charge you for the test. If it has over recorded we will refund you the amount we estimate has been overcharged on your latest bill. If it has under recorded we will not claim anything back from you.

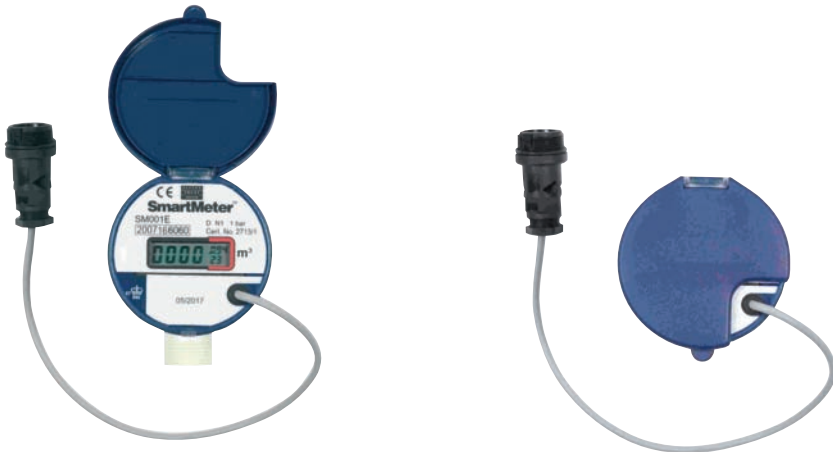
Test records in recent years show that no meters have failed for being inaccurate by over recording. They have been within accuracy limits or have failed for under recording. If the meter is accurate you will have to pay for the test.

Very occasionally we may decide to test your meter if we think it might be necessary. We will pay for this and we will increase or reduce your latest bill if we find a problem. Any adjustment would be based on how much water you normally use.

How will I pay if I have a meter?

You will pay for your water and sewerage services based on how much water passes through the meter. You will also pay standing charges for billing and reading the meter and a charge for surface water drainage. You will receive two bills each year (one every six months) and we will always aim for one of these to be based on an actual meter reading.

There are lots of ways that you can pay your bill but Direct Debit is the easiest and most convenient. You can also use our account number and sort code to set up internet banking, pay with a Watercard or cash at any PayPoint outlet, use your Debit card to pay online using the 'BillPay' system or use your payment plan or payment book. Go to www.stwater.co.uk/waystopay or call our Customer Contact Centre for more information. Our Code of Practice – Your bill has lots more information about how to pay your bill. You can access this at www.stwater.co.uk or by calling our Customer Contact Centre.



My bill seems higher than usual, does this mean I have a leak?

If you have a meter and you have used more water than usual, for example if you used a garden sprinkler during the bill period, your bill should be higher. However if you don't think that you have used extra water it may be that there is a leak on your pipe.

You can check this yourself in a few simple steps:

- Turn off all the taps in the house and make sure that there is no water being used.
- Read the meter and take a note of the reading.
- Take a second reading after an hour, making sure no water is used in the meantime.
- If the second reading is higher, there may be a leak.
- You can also check for other signs of a leak such as areas of lush vegetation during dry periods and other obvious damp patches or a constant noise coming from the pipes in your home that sounds like the noise that is made when water is being used. Checking for any faults with water flowing through your toilet overflow (particularly for new bathroom fittings where the overflow is diverted back down the toilet flow) can be useful.



Will you check for leaks when I have a meter fitted?

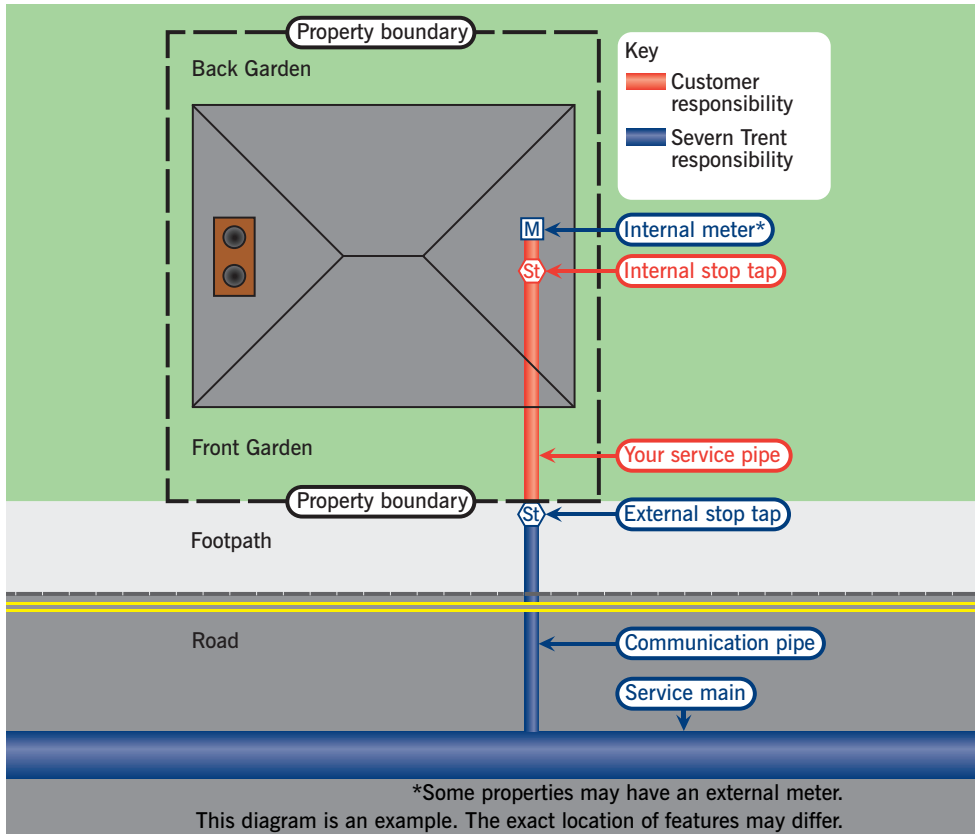
If we are fitting a meter we will check for any leaks on the supply pipe and if we find one we will tell you about it. We will repair the leak under our free repair scheme as long as we don't need to do any more excavation. If you want to you can arrange for someone else to do the work for you but you will have to pay for it and we won't be able to approve the work. If you don't repair the leak we can charge you for the extra water that is being used.

We strongly recommend that you read your meter regularly to make sure you don't have any leaks. If you get a leak anywhere in the pipes on your side of the meter (within the property boundary) this can mean that you use more water and therefore you will get a higher bill. The diagram opposite helps illustrate as a general guide who is responsible for which part of the supply pipe. In some cases where the features are and who is responsible for them may vary.

It is your responsibility (or your landlord's) to repair and maintain your part of the service pipe, in the same way as it is for the other pipe work and fittings in your home, even if the meter is some distance from your property.

Our leakage policy

It is our duty under law to prevent the loss of water from the water supply network. If a leak that is your responsibility is not repaired under our free repair scheme or is not repaired promptly by the property owner, we may start legal proceedings under section 75 of the Water Industry Act 1991. You can find more details about our leakage policy and free repair scheme in our Code of Practice – Leakage. Visit www.stwater.co.uk or call our Customer Contact Centre to request this.



Are any bill reductions available for vulnerable customers?

If you experience difficulties because you use a lot of water and have a low income the WaterSure scheme (formerly the vulnerable household scheme) could help. It is a statutory scheme that offers you a capped charge. If someone in your household receives benefits and has a medical condition that makes you use more water, or if you receive benefits and have 3 or more children under 19, you may be able to apply.

You can qualify for a reduced rate if you pay for your water based on a meter reading and you are receiving any of these benefits:

- Income Support
- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Benefit
- Child Tax Credit (except in receipt of the family element only)
- Pension Credit
- Working Tax Credit

You must also have either:

- 3 or more dependent children under the age of 19 years living at the property

or

- you or someone else living at the property must have a medical condition requiring high water usage

For more information and an application form visit www.stwater.co.uk or call us on **08457 500 500**. You can also email directly to watersure@severntrent.co.uk

I'm moving house soon, what should I do?

To make sure that your account move runs smoothly we would prefer you to tell us at least five days before you move so that we can record a closing reading and organise the details. It is vital that you tell us at least two days before you move otherwise you will have to pay the charges up to the earliest of the following dates:

- 28 days after you notify us of your move
- The next planned meter reading date
- The date that the new occupier tells us they have moved in

If you are moving house and staying within our area and your new property doesn't have a meter you can apply to have one fitted free. Contact our Customer Contact Centre for more information.

I have individual needs – how can you help?

We need to know if you have individual needs so please contact us to join our Access register.

Being on the register means you can access the following services:

- Correspondence in Large print, Braille, Electronic or Audio formats
- Bill reading service
- Textphone service
- Confidential password to help identify our staff who may call at your door
- Special meter reading arrangements
- Special water supply arrangements if you are a home dialysis patient
- Help with the provision of free bottled water during a supply interruption

For further information or if you wish to be added to our Access register, please contact us on **08457 500 500**. We will take your details and arrange for our Access team to contact you or send an Access information pack.

Bogus callers

If a Severn Trent Water employee asks to come into your home, they will show you an ID card with their name and photograph on it. You can check their identity by calling **0800 783 4444** and we will confirm if they are genuine. Do not call any other number they give you or accept any excuses. If you are in any doubt, do not let them in. For your protection, we have a password scheme which can protect you against bogus callers. For more information please download our 'Stop' leaflet from www.stwater.co.uk or telephone **08457 500 500** to request a copy. If you use a textphone you can also contact us on **0800 328 1155**.

How can I contact you?

Our website is designed to provide you with answers and advice for many queries you may have. You can also pay your bill, apply for a meter, update your meter reading, check your water quality, change your address or report a leak.

Visit us at www.stwater.co.uk

For general enquiries or complaints about your bill, please contact our Customer Contact Centre on: **08457 500 500**

8.00 am to 8.00 pm Monday to Friday

8.00 am to 1.00 pm Saturday

You can also email on: customer.relations@severntrent.co.uk

If English is not your first language and you need help, please call and ask for our Language Line service.

For operational emergencies (leaks/burst mains/sewer blockages/sewer flooding/dangerous apparatus) and general operational information or complaints about your water and sewerage services, please contact our Customer Operations Service Centre on: **0800 783 4444**.

The centre is operational 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

The postal address is;

Severn Trent Water Ltd

Customer Operations Service Centre

Sherbourne House

St Martins Road

Finham

Coventry

CV3 6SD

If you use a textphone you can contact us on **0800 328 1155**
(available 24 hours a day)

Our headquarters are located at:

2297 Coventry Road
Birmingham B26 3PU

www.stwater.co.uk

0121 722 4000

If you only receive sewerage services from Severn Trent Water, your water may be supplied by South Staffordshire Water Plc. In this case you should contact us if you have a query about your sewerage service and South Staffordshire Water if you have a query or complaint about your water supply or bills. Contact South Staffordshire Water at:

South Staffordshire Water Plc

Green Lane

Walsall

West Midlands WS2 7PD

Or call: **01922 638 282** (general enquiries)

0845 607 0456 (billing enquiries)

0800 389 1011 (supply queries)

The Consumer Council for Water (CCWater) is there to review all issues that affect your interests as a water customer, liaising with us and making representations on your behalf. CCWater staff can give you free independent advice on issues that affect you as a water customer and they will investigate any complaints that you can't resolve directly with us through our own complaints procedures. They will also advise you if the matter you have raised is a dispute that can be settled by our regulator, the Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat). You can contact CCWater at:

Consumer Council for Water Central

1st Floor

Victoria Square House

Victoria Square

Birmingham B2 4AJ

0121 345 1017 or **0845 702 3953**

central@ccwater.org.uk

www.ccwater.org.uk

Severn Trent Water

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This publication is available
in alternative formats, including
large print and Braille.

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