

# code of practice

your water supply



# your water supply

At Severn Trent Water we aim to provide excellent value by delivering a high quality service at low cost. Our charges are amongst the lowest in the industry and we strive to ensure that our service performance compares to the very best.

We operate under a licence which was granted by the Secretary of State for the Environment. This means that there are many laws and regulations which govern what we do and 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.

This leaflet forms part of our comprehensive '**Code of Practice**' for domestic (household) customers. The leaflets describe the services we provide and what your rights are and what to do if things go wrong.

We have prepared the Code of Practice in consultation with Consumer Council for Water Midlands and the **Director General of Water Services**. From time to time we will revise the Code and update it to include our improvements in services to you.

Nothing in our Code of Practice affects your rights under the Law, nor is it a contract between the Company and you.

Our Code of Practice comprises the following leaflets:

- Help at Hand
- Our Charges
- Dealing With Your Used Water
- Metering Your Water Supply (incorporating our Leakage Code)
- Your Water Supply
- Water Bills, Helping You to Pay Them (incorporating our Debt Code)

Copies can be obtained by telephoning our **Billing Customer Contact Centre** on **08457 500 500**.

Alternatively, copies are available on our website [www.stwater.co.uk](http://www.stwater.co.uk)

# the water services we provide

## quality

The quality of water for domestic purposes is controlled by Regulations issued by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). These incorporate, and in some cases are more stringent than, the requirements of the **European Community Drinking Water Directive**. Standards are set for the chemical and bacterial quality of the water and also its acceptability – colour, clarity, smell and taste.

Our supplies fully meet the requirements of the Regulations and we aim to maintain and, where necessary, improve further on this position. If you want further details, please contact our **Operational Customer Contact Centre**.

In line with the Regulations, we must sample and test the water at Regular intervals. Our Quality Inspectors visit 20,000 properties each year at random and we are required to maintain records of those tests. Local records are available for inspection by the public free of charge. If you want to know about the water in your area or if you have a complaint about the quality of your drinking water, please contact us. Whenever we take a sample of your water following a complaint, we will provide you with details of our analysis and our interpretation of the results.

Please contact our **Operational Customer Contact Centre** for further information or alternatively you can request this information directly from our website [www.stwater.co.uk](http://www.stwater.co.uk)

## our business

Our business is to supply treated water to our customers and to connect all new customers requiring a water supply for household use. This booklet tells you what services we must provide, what we aim to do and what your responsibilities are.

Sometimes the quality and appearance of water can be temporarily affected by repairs to the distribution system or other work. If you are concerned in any way and think there is a serious problem, contact us straight away and avoid drinking the water in the meantime.

On very rare occasions it may be necessary, as a precaution, to advise you to boil your water or even not to use it at all for drinking and cooking. We will tell you as soon as possible using the most appropriate method. In such an event, we will work closely with public health and medical experts and appropriate authorities.

In the unlikely event of us having to issue an official 'boil water' or 'do not drink' notice in writing, we will make a payment of up to £25 under our Guaranteed Standards Scheme. Further details can be found in our 'Help at Hand' booklet. Copies are available from our **Operational Customer Contact Centre**.

## water supply (water fittings) regulations 1999

The Water Fittings Regulations are national requirements for the design, installation and maintenance of plumbing systems, water fittings and water-using appliances. Their purpose is to prevent misuse, waste, under consumption or erroneous measurement of water and, most importantly, to prevent contamination of drinking water.

The Government requires water suppliers to enforce the Regulations, therefore, as with the previous Water Byelaws Severn Trent Water Ltd will undertake inspections of new and existing installations to check that the regulations are being met. Where breaches of the regulations are found, Severn Trent Water Ltd will 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.

Plumbing systems must be designed, installed and maintained to meet the regulations requirements. Plumbing must be properly installed and maintained to protect water quality, to ensure safety, ease of access for maintenance, detection of leakage, protection against damage or freezing etc. If you are doing your own installation, ensure you know what requirements you must meet. If you are employing someone else, consider using an Approved Contractor who will guarantee compliance of the new installation.

We hold a list of approved contractors. A copy of the list for your area is available from us by contacting our **Operational Customer Contact Centre** or you can visit our website which is [www.stwater.co.uk/watermark](http://www.stwater.co.uk/watermark).

The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 and their Schedules and Statutory Instruments (1999 No. 1148 and No. 1506) are available from HMSO and via the Internet ([www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/stat.htm](http://www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/stat.htm)).

## rights of entry

We have statutory rights of entry to customers' premises to investigate compliance with Regulations, to take samples and carry out surveys and work.

Except in an emergency, we will call at a reasonable time. When exercising our rights of entry, we will give you 24 hours notice for investigating Regulations compliance and for monitoring water quality and 7 days in all other cases. If we have not given you notice you have the right to refuse entry. Information on the Regulations can be obtained from our **Sales & Business Department** on our business number listed at the back of this booklet.

## warning – bogus callers

At all times our staff will show you a valid identity card bearing our logo and a photograph. Unfortunately there are an increasing number of incidents involving bogus callers. These are people who impersonate utility staff (such as your water company) to gain entry and access to your home. We support the message 'Stop, Chain and Check' before opening the door. For more information about this contact your local police service.

We recognize the devastating effect bogus callers can have on customers. That is why we have worked with the local police and the BBC to publish a leaflet and window sticker called '**Don't let them in**'. This can be requested by calling our **Operational Customer Contact Centre**. In addition, if you live on your own and would like greater security, you can contact us to request a doorstep protection password. To do this please call our **Billing Customer Contact Centre** on **08457 500 500**.

## bogus callers

Bogus callers can have a devastating effect. In an effort to combat this we have introduced a doorstep password protection scheme which is available to all our customers. If you are interested in this scheme, please contact our **Billing Customer Contact Centre** for further information.

## individual needs

We understand that not all customers' circumstances and requirements are the same, therefore we have developed a range of free services for customers with individual needs. The services include providing information in large print or Braille, a bill and leaflet reading scheme or a nominee scheme, arrangements for home dialysis patients and special meter reading arrangements.

If you would like to register or to receive further information, please contact our **Billing Customer Contact Centre**.

The leaflet is available in alternative formats on request.

# your water supply

## quantity

We must provide you with enough water for normal domestic purposes; that is, drinking, washing, cooking, central heating and sanitation, as well as watering the garden and washing the car, provided a hosepipe is not used. However, we aim to ensure that in normal conditions you can use a hosepipe if you wish.

The weather is becoming increasingly unpredictable and in recent years we have experienced lower than average rainfall for our region, at a time when the demand for water has been rising. We have responded to this challenge by putting together a water efficiency plan. This is to ensure that we have enough water to meet your requirements without having to impose restrictions. Our plans include:

- Investing heavily in new water mains to ensure that our 'grid' is strengthened.
- Finding and using new sources of water to supplement our existing resources.
- Reducing the amount of leakage from our pipes and customer pipes.
- Promoting water savings and efficiency to reduce demand.
- Metering customers who wish to use a garden sprinkler or who have a swimming pool.

Although we do not anticipate having to do so, we may have to impose hosepipe restrictions in extreme conditions. If these persist, we may have to resort to standpipes but we will ensure that customers affected will receive compensation.

Further details can be found in our 'Help at Hand' booklet. Copies can be obtained by telephoning our **Operational Customer Contact Centre**.



## pressure

We must supply water at a pressure sufficient to ensure it reaches the top most storey of every building unless the building is at such a height that water will not flow to it by gravity from our reservoir to tank.

We are required to report to the Director General those properties at risk of receiving less than 10 metres head of pressure whilst receiving 9 litres flow per minute (enough water to fill a 2 gallon container in 1 minute).

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

- The height of the property above the water main and its height relative to the reservoir.
- The condition and size of the customer's service pipe.
- Whether the property shares a service pipe with other properties.
- Peak demand conditions.

If you think that your water pressure is too low, we will investigate the cause free of charge. If the cause is our responsibility we will take appropriate action. If it is not, we will tell you what you need to do. For further information please contact our **Operational Customer Contact Centre**.

If your pressure falls below 7 metres head in our service pipe for longer than 1 hour on 2 occasions in any 28 day period you will be entitled to a £25 payment. This applies in normal operating conditions and is limited to one payment per year.

# responsibilities for pipes

## interruptions

While we work to provide a constant supply of water, some events will inevitably interrupt the flow. For example, bursts in mains and the failures of pumps or their electricity supply. If there is a problem, contact our **Operational Customer Contact Centre** and we will investigate immediately. Information about our service guarantees is outlined in the booklet 'Help at Hand', which is available from our **Operational Customer Contact Centre**.

If the mains supply fails we must restore it as soon as possible. Our target is to do so in less than 12 hours but the larger mains are more difficult to repair and can take longer. If the interruption lasts longer than 24 hours, we must provide you with an emergency supply.

If we plan to interrupt your supply for more than 4 hours to do planned maintenance work, we must give you reasonable (normally 48 hours) written notice.

We will also inform you of the duration of the interruption. If we fail to give you notice or fail to restore the supply by the time stated, you will be entitled to a service guarantee payment. As part of our programme for checking leaks we sometimes turn off sections of mains pipe at night in a programmed way to identify the leaks. We usually do this between midnight and 6.00 am. These interruptions normally last less than 2 hours and because the disruption is slight we will not tell you in advance.

If you think that this is likely to cause you a problem, please contact our **Operational Customer Contact Centre**.

## responsibility for pipes – our pipes

The water mains in the public highway are generally ours. Some water mains cross private land and we have powers to lay and maintain those mains. We have a Code of Practice for pipe laying on private land (Code of Practice for the Exercise of Works Powers) which can be obtained from our Legal Department.

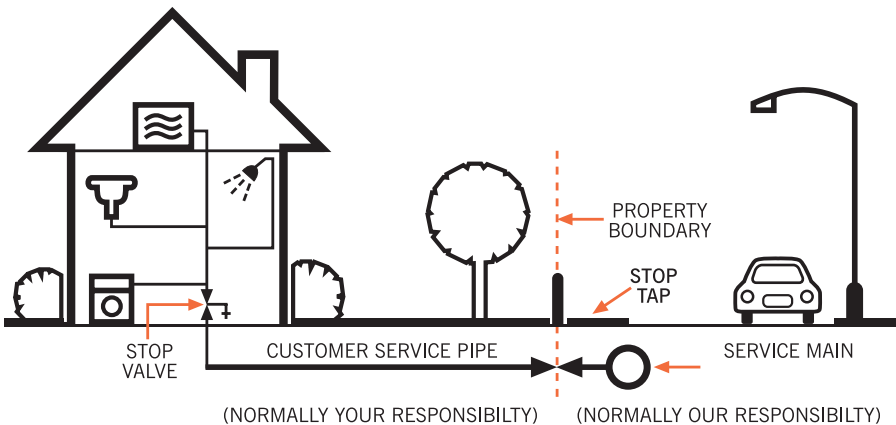
Normally the service pipe from the mains to the property is ours until it reaches the boundary of the highway. Most properties have an underground stop tap at the boundary which is our responsibility.

## responsibility for pipes – your pipes

The service pipe from the stop tap which takes the water into your house is normally yours (or the landlord's). This part of the service pipe is usually referred to as the customer service pipe. It is your responsibility to maintain your pipe in good order just as you would maintain the plumbing in your house – even when, as in some cases, it runs under other properties before reaching your house.

If you have any problems on your pipework, call us anyway, we may be able to help.

Some of the problems that you may have with your pipes are described on the next page.



## shared customer service pipe

You may share a service pipe with one or more of your neighbours and the flow of water at your tap may be unacceptably low when your neighbours are using water. If the pipe is in a poor condition, we can require you and your neighbours to share the cost of replacing it with separate pipes. This would improve both the flow and the quality of water at your tap.

We can also require separation of a shared pipe if:

- One of the households on the shared pipe falls into payment arrears.
- The houses are converted into a larger number of flats or homes.
- The shared pipe has been interfered with.

If any dispute arises about the circumstances outlined above, it may be referred to the **Director General of Water Services** to decide the outcome.

## leaks

The legal position is that where there is a leak on your service pipe it is your responsibility to repair it.

If your bill seems abnormally high, it may mean that there is a leak on your service pipe or it may be due to high consumption, for example, if a garden sprinkler was used during the period covered by your bill. If you suspect that there is a leak on your pipe, you can check this yourself by turning off all the taps in the house and making sure that there is no water being used. Read the meter, take a note of the reading and then take a second reading after an hour ensuring that no water is used in the property in the meantime. If the second reading is higher, there may be a leak. Other signs that might suggest there is a leak on the service pipe are patchy areas of lush vegetation during dry periods and other obvious damp patches.

If a leak is discovered on your supply pipe, we all want it repaired quickly. If the leak is reasonably accessible and is not inside or under the building, we will repair it free of charge, provided an application form has been completed. We will repair up to two leaks in a two year period on a customer service pipe. However, if there is a further leak or your service pipe is generally in a poor condition or if it is not reasonably accessible and we are unable to undertake the repair, we will discuss the options with you. However the service we offer is not an emergency call out service. There are certain conditions whereby we will not carry out a repair. Please contact our **Operational Customer Contact Centre** for more details.

Alternatively, you can repair the leak yourself or use a contractor or plumber of your choice, at your expense. If leaks are not repaired promptly we will serve notice on you and any other customers concerned, requiring the work to be done at your own cost. If the leak is still running after this notice period has expired, we will do the work and charge you for the full cost of the repairs or a proportion if the supply is shared. If, in extreme cases, the leak endangers people or property, or threatens to contaminate the public water supply, we can cut off the supply until the leak is repaired.

If you suspect there is a leak on your service pipe or you spot a leak in the road, please contact our **Operational Customer Contact Centre** who will arrange an appointment to visit. This service is free of charge.

If you have a meter fitted outside at the boundary you will of course be paying for the wasted water. We have a **Code of Practice on Leakage** which provides some safeguards for you, principally:

- When the meter is installed we will check for any leaks on the service pipe. If we discover a leak we can repair it under our free repair scheme subject to the terms of the scheme or you can arrange for someone else to do the work for you at your cost.
- If there is a leak we will make an adjustment to the charges provided the leak is repaired promptly and provided that it was not caused by your negligence and was not one you should have known about and could have repaired sooner. This adjustment will not be repeated for subsequent leaks.

Where adjustments are made to water consumption charges a similar adjustment will be made for the sewerage charges.

If a leak occurs on your supply, you will need to complete a leakage claim form which can be obtained from our **Billing Customer Contact Centre**.

The full Code of Practice is outlined in our booklet 'Metering your Water Supply' which is available from our **Operational Customer Contact Centre**.

## lead pipes

The water we supply is essentially lead free but traces of lead can be picked up from the service pipe or your own plumbing if these are made of lead. High lead levels can be a health risk, particularly to young children, and we therefore treat our water to ensure that lead dissolution is kept to an absolute minimum.

We monitor lead levels across our area. We can provide advice on typical results for your area. For further information please contact our **Operational Customer Contact Centre**.

If you have lead pipes you may decide to replace your service pipe and in this case, we will replace free of charge our part of the service pipe at the same time. If you have a lead service pipe which is shared and you and your neighbours agree to have it replaced, we may request separate pipes to be laid. If you would like further information, please contact us on our business number.

If you decide to replace your lead service pipe, you may wish to contact your local council who may, in some circumstances, be able to provide a grant.

## badly rusted service pipe

Old iron service pipes can become badly rusted inside. The rust restricts the flow through the pipe and may discolour the water. If this is the case we will replace our part of the service pipe and suggest you replace your part.

## electrical earthing – warning

The earthing of the electrical installation in the home is an important safety measure and the householders own responsibility. The use of metal water pipes as a means of providing electrical earthing for the property was once common practice. However, this method has not been permitted since 1966.

It is important you appreciate that the vast majority of new water mains and service pipes (including replacements) are now plastic and therefore totally unsuitable as a means of electrical earthing.

Whenever we come across metal water service pipes that could be used as electrical earthing we will take the opportunity to draw your attention to the potentially dangerous practice. In these circumstances, we strongly advise you to contact your electricity supply company or other approved electrical contractor to discuss the matter. They may recommend that you have the earthing arrangements to your property checked and they are entitled to charge for this service.

## new supply connections

We must connect all new premises to our water mains if you ask us to do so and if the supply is required for domestic purposes. Alternatively, on development sites connections can, if authorised in advance, be carried out by an approved contractor working to our self connection scheme. All new connections will be metered and charged according to our metered tariffs. We require developers to fit their own meters on new service connections. Where we make the new connection you will have to meet our costs which include:

- The cost of making the connection.
- The cost of laying our part of the service pipe and arranging for it to be metered.
- Appropriate reinstatement of the highway.

Where the new connection is made by an approved contractor you will have to meet our costs which include:

- Administration and supervision.

In addition, for all new connections you must also pay an infrastructure charge which is a fixed contribution to the cost of developing the local mains network for supplying additional demand.

To obtain a new connection, you must first complete an application form, providing relevant details. We will then inspect the site and if you wish us to do the work, we will send you a quotation. Before we will make a connection we must be satisfied that:

- Your part of the service pipe has been laid to our specification and complies with the Water Supply Regulations.
- A separate service pipe has been provided to each of the buildings or premises that are separately occupied.
- The Regulations have been or will be complied with.
- You have obtained any necessary consents from others (eg landlords).
- Relevant charges for making the connection have been paid.

Once you have done all this, paid the necessary charges, laid your part of the service pipe and told us, we must connect the service pipe to the mains within 14 days (21 days if we have to lay part of the service pipe). Normally we will agree a time with you to make the connection but the period may be extended where working restrictions are imposed under the New Road and Street Works Act 1991. If we fail to meet these deadlines and you sustain loss or damage as a result, you may have a legal claim against us. Any dispute relating to such connection may be referred to the **Director General of Water Services**; more details are outlined in our booklet 'Help at Hand' which is available by contacting our **Operational Customer Contact Centre**.

If you ask for a new main to serve several properties we will provide it but you and any other applicants must pay any difference between the income we receive for charges for water supplied for domestic purposes from the main and our reasonable costs in providing the main. You may have to pay these amounts for 12 years. We will also require some security from you before beginning the work. For our part, we must provide the main within 3 months of your signing the agreement containing the terms on which we do so. If we fail to meet this deadline and you sustain loss or damage as a result, you may have a legal claim against us.

If we cannot agree the amount you must pay or the amount of security you should give, either of us can refer the matter to an independent arbitrator for decision.

Alternatively, if it has been agreed in advance you can choose to have a main laid by approved installers. Where this is done, you will have to pay for the design to be checked, for the work to be supervised and for us to test the main and make the connection to our distribution network.

Any dispute in respect of the amount we require you to pay or the undertakings or securities we expect you to give can be referred to the **Director General of Water Services** for arbitration. Further information is available in our booklet 'Help at Hand'. Copies can be obtained by telephoning our **Operational Customer Contact Centre**.

When a property is connected to our water mains or sewerage system for the first time, we must ensure that we can deliver the same high standard of service as a result of the extra demand. For all new connections you must pay an infrastructure charge which is a fixed contribution towards additional investment in our local distribution system. The charge is in addition to the actual cost of making a connection.

Infrastructure charges are intended to ensure that the costs of the investment are met from a one off charge to new properties as and when they are connected rather than from higher charges to existing properties. The maximum infrastructure charge for a domestic supply is set by the **Director General of Water Services**.

## contact numbers and addresses

### Operational Customer Contact Centre

Sherbourne House, St Martin's Road, Finham, Coventry, CV3 6SD

Telephone number: **0800 783 4444**

Opening hours: 8.00 am to 8.00 pm Monday to Friday  
8.00 am to 1.00 pm Saturday

### Out of Hours Call Centre

For operational emergencies outside normal working hours

Telephone number: **0800 783 4444**

If you wish to contact us using the Text Telephone Facility, our number is:

Telephone number: **0800 328 1155 (available 24 hours a day)**

### Business Address

Severn Trent Water Ltd, 2297 Coventry Road, Birmingham, B26 3PU

Telephone number: **0121 722 4000**

Opening hours: 8.00 am to 6.00 pm Monday to Friday

### Legal Department

Severn Trent Water Ltd, 2297 Coventry Road, Birmingham, B26 3PU

Telephone number: **0121 722 4000**

Opening hours: 8.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday

You can also e-mail us direct at: [customer.relations@severntrent.co.uk](mailto:customer.relations@severntrent.co.uk)

Alternatively, why not visit our website on: [www.stwater.co.uk](http://www.stwater.co.uk)

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# Severn Trent Water

## Severn Trent Water Ltd

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

This publication is available in alternative formats including large print and Braille.  
For more information call **08457 500 500**  
or textphone **0800 328 1155**.



Your water. *Safe in our hands.*