

# Code of practice – dealing with your used water



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 minimum 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)**

We provide and maintain systems of public sewers which take the waste water from your buildings and drains to sewage treatment work. The system of pipes which carry the waste water is called the sewerage system. We also collect surface

water run-off from roofs, roads and other paved areas and transport it to suitable watercourses and rivers through similar surface water sewerage systems.

## **Our sewerage services**

### **Types of sewers**

There are various types of sewers:

- Surface water sewers carry rainwater which runs off roofs and roads directly into rivers, watercourses and eventually the sea.
- Foul sewers carry the waste from toilets, water which has been used for cooking and washing and effluent from industrial premises, to sewage treatment works.
- Combined sewers carry both the rainwater run-off from roofs and roads and water which has been used for domestic and industrial purposes to treatment works.

## **Protection against flooding from sewers**

It is important that connections are made to the correct type of sewer otherwise problems can occur. For example, pollution can arise if foul flows are connected into surface water drains or sewers which run into local watercourses.

If you are connecting any foul or waste drains, for instance, from washing machines or dishwashers, please ensure that the connection is to a foul or combined drain or sewer.

Your local council will be able to advise you about any building regulation requirements concerning building drainage.

We aim to provide enough capacity in our sewers to protect homes from flooding but the weather can create a risk and we will give priority to problems of flooding which are so severe that, statistically, they occur

more frequently than once in five years.

Flooding from sewers can also occur for other reasons, for example, blockages. If there is a sewer blockage or a pumping station breakdown which threatens to flood homes, we will have a representative on site as quickly as possible. We aim to start work within four hours unless a large number of flooding incidents during exceptionally heavy rainfall prevent us from doing so.

We will provide a named contact to all customers who have suffered internal flooding.

Where requested we will provide an explanation of the cause of the flooding within 10 working days, however if we have to carry out a detailed investigation into the cause of the flooding then we will keep you informed quarterly until we complete our work.

We are not legally liable for loss or damage caused by flooding from public sewers unless we have been negligent. If you are affected by flooding and it has resulted in loss or damage to your property, your insurance company should be able to help. If you are not insured or you are facing hardship because of an incident, then please contact us. We will try to help. However, it is your responsibility to be properly and adequately insured.

We operate a scheme called Floodcare for anyone unfortunate enough to suffer flooding from a public sewer. Floodcare aims to ensure that the problem is dealt with promptly and that we do as much as we can to help afterwards. In nearly all circumstances we will provide practical advice and help to clear up any mess. With the customer's agreement we will clear sewage debris when the flooding has receded and disinfect affected areas.

If your property is flooded you may be eligible for a refund of sewerage charges under our Service Guarantees (see the booklet 'Help at Hand') or a payment under the Floodcare Scheme. The payments will be additional to any claims you may make on your own household insurance policy.

### **Our responsibility for pipes**

In most cases, our sewers are situated in roads or public open spaces. However, in certain circumstances, our sewers may run through private gardens, in which case we need to preserve a right of access for maintenance and legal protection against building over or near our pipe. Where we need to lay or maintain pipes in your land, we will observe a Code of Practice for working on private land. A copy of the code ('Code of Practice for the Exercise of Works Powers') is available from our Legal Department.

## **Private or unadopted sewers**

There are some sewers in our area which we do not own. They are called private or unadopted sewers. This means that when they were built or when they would normally have become publicly owned, the owner or developer did not wish them to become public sewers or they failed to meet acceptable standards. They have since remained privately owned, perhaps by the developer or jointly by the owners of the houses which they serve.

You can apply for us to adopt a private sewer so that we, rather than you, become responsible for its operation and maintenance. However, we will want to be satisfied that it is in a satisfactory condition before taking on the responsibility for it. You can appeal to the Director General of Water Services if you consider that we have unreasonably refused to

adopt a sewer or have imposed unreasonable conditions.

If you are buying a property, insist that your solicitor asks whether the sewer is adopted. If it is not, you may be responsible for its maintenance, repair or replacement – and you will want to check its condition.

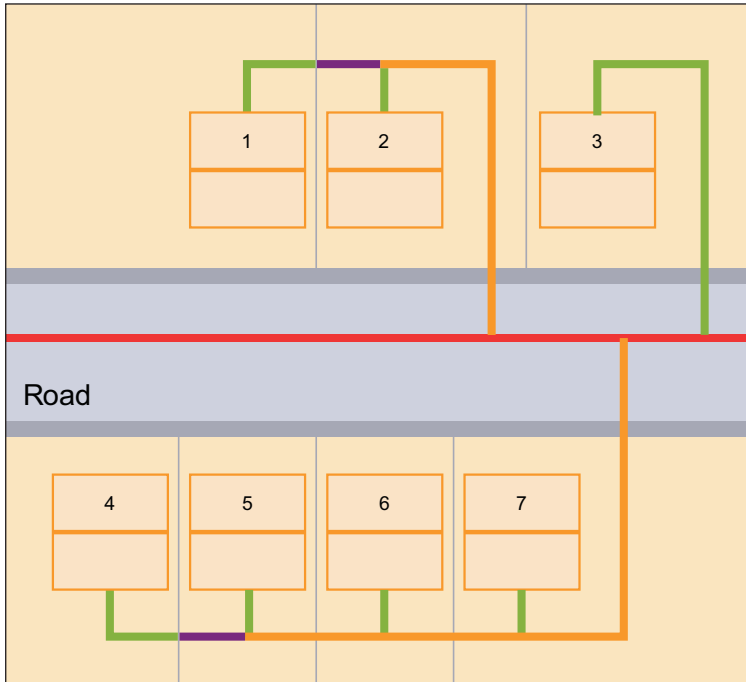
## **Your pipes**

The drains which carry your household's waste water and rainwater are normally your responsibility both within your property and from its edge under the footpath and highway to the point of connection with our sewer (see diagram on facing page).

## **Map of our sewers**

It is our duty to keep a map showing the position of public sewers and you have a right to examine this record. To see the maps you should contact us on our business number given at the back of this booklet.

# Layout of drains and sewers



Above are examples of drain and sewer layouts, these general rules apply to most property types. For simplicity in the diagram below only a single system has been shown but most properties have two separate systems draining them as shown in the diagram above.

- 1 Green lines show drains that connect to single properties and are usually located within the property boundary. However, in some cases the drain may be located in land owned by someone else for example, a neighbour will own the drain even though they do not connect to it this is shown by purple lines.
- 2 Orange lines are private sewers connecting at least two properties

and are owned jointly by the people who are connected to it. Private sewers may lie within or outside the boundaries of the properties they serve.

- 3 Most properties are served by a combination of drains and private sewers.
- 4 Red lines are sewers owned by us, called public sewers which are located in the highway or land in public ownership. Occasionally, some are located in privately owned land.
- 5 If your property was built before October 1937 and you have a blockage in the sewer responsibility for clearance may lie with Severn Trent. Our customer contact staff will advise on this.

### **New sewer connections**

You are entitled to have your drain or sewer connected to our sewers subject to certain limitations and practical requirements and to you meeting all costs.

You will need to supply us with details of the drain or sewer to be connected and how the connection will be made. We will let you know within 21 days whether your proposals are accepted and tell you what the costs will be. We can refuse permission only if we consider that the connection would prejudice our sewer or the exercise of our sewerage function in your area. For example we will not normally agree to a foul drain connection to a surface water sewer. If you disagree with our decision, you can appeal to the Director General of Water Services.

For each new connection you will have to pay:

- A charge for our inspecting

the work or doing the work ourselves.

- An Infrastructure Charge which is a fixed contribution to the cost of developing the local sewer network.

Once you have paid the charges you must give us 14 days notice of the day you or your builder propose to do the work.

If you ask for a new sewer to serve several properties, we will provide it where practicable but you and any other applicants must pay any difference between the income we receive from sewerage charges in respect of these properties and our reasonable costs in providing the sewer. You will 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 sewer within six months, or a longer period if agreed between us, 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. Any dispute may be referred to an arbitrator. You will find details of this in our booklet 'Help at Hand' which can be obtained from our Operational Customer Contact Centre.

### **Infrastructure charges**

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.

### **Sewage treatment**

The sewers bring domestic and industrial effluents to sewage works for treatment and safe disposal to rivers. The treated sewage effluent discharged from our treatment works must comply with statutory conditions set by the Environment Agency (EA). The EA checks to ensure that we meet these conditions and enters the results of its samples into a public register.

All sewage sludge, the by-product of sewage treatment, must be disposed of in accordance with statutory requirements and Government licences.

We operate our works in accordance with good practice but sewage can smell. We try to limit the smell as much as possible but cannot guarantee to eliminate it altogether. If we are causing you a nuisance, please contact our Operational Customer Contact Centre.

### **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.

## 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**

### 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**

Alternatively, why not visit our website on:

**www.stwater.co.uk**

The Environment Agency  
Sapphire House East, 550 Streetsbrook Road, Solihull, B91 1QT  
Telephone number:  
**0121 711 2324**

Addresses for local councils can be found in your local telephone directory.

**Severn Trent Water Ltd**

2297 Coventry Road

Birmingham B26 3PU

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



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

For further information please:

call 08457 500 500

textphone 0800 328 1155

[customer.relations@severntrent.co.uk](mailto:customer.relations@severntrent.co.uk)



When you have finished with  
this leaflet please recycle it