

# Safeguarding your drinking water

**Our policy for the enforcement of the Water Supply  
(Water Fittings) Regulations 1999**

## Introduction by Simon Cocks (Wholesale Operations)

At Severn Trent Water, we pride ourselves on supplying the highest quality water to our customers and we're committed to maintaining these standards. Given the importance of this, we believe that it is imperative that all others join us in taking on this commitment to rigorously follow the rules and standards that apply in using and maintaining pipes and water fittings inside homes and business.

It's only by making this joint commitment to our customers that all of us will, as a minimum, adhere to the standards that are stringently observed and monitored by our regulators.

These rules are called the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 (the Regulations) and are designed to stop the waste, misuse, undue consumption, erroneous measurement and more importantly contamination of the drinking water supply.

Whilst it's a strict legal requirement for us to enforce the regulations, as a common goal we should all want to adopt the highest standards and make sure we never find ourselves in breach of the regulations or standards that protect all of our customers.

It's critical for us that we provide clarity and consistency to make sure that our approach to enforcement is clearly understood. With that in mind, I'm pleased to introduce you to our Water Regulations Enforcement Policy – Safeguarding your drinking water.

## Our aim

We aim to carry out an inspection programme based on criteria concerning the risk posed by the installation, type of premise and previous inspections.

## Enforcement

We have a legal obligation to enforce the Regulations, and certain sections of the Water Industry Act 1991 in some circumstances, which are carried out by a team of qualified Water Fittings Regulations Technicians. We prioritise our inspections based on risk. Higher priority sites include:

- **High Risk Premises**  
Heavy Industrial, Commercial & Agricultural
- **Public Buildings**  
Education, Medical, Sport Centres, Hostelryes & Exhibition Halls
- **Private Water Supplies**  
Water abstracted from an alternative source other than water provided by the water undertaker, i.e. Borehole, River & Spring
- **New Connections to the public water supply**  
E.g. Domestic or Non-Domestic premises

Reactive inspections may also be undertaken at premises where there's a risk posed to public health.

We'll ensure compliance with the Regulations by responding to contraventions in a way which is proportionate to the severity and persistence of the contraventions identified. Our actions will take into account the level of impact with regards to public health protection and/or waste of water.

## Our approach to enforcement

### Transparency

If someone is found to be in breach of the Regulations, we'll give the customer a clear explanation of what's wrong and what they need to do in order to comply. Depending on the level of risk, we'll agree with the customer an appropriate timeframe for the works to be completed to ensure full compliance with the Regulations. However, if the breach is deemed to be serious, we may need to undertake formal enforcement action which could include prosecution or immediate disconnection of the supply.

### Consistency

The Regulations will be enforced in a consistent manner, taking into account individual circumstances and the level of risk identified.

## Accountability

We're accountable for our actions and more information on the way we deal with comments and complaints can be found at [stwater.co.uk](http://stwater.co.uk).

## What we do

To support the enforcement of the Regulations we'll carry out the following:

### 1. Education

We recognise the importance of working with developers, designers, installers, trade associations and local authorities during the early development stages of any build which will enable designers and installers to comply voluntarily with the Regulations.

### 2. Approved plumber/contractor schemes

We operate our own approved plumber scheme (WaterMark) which is aligned to the national WaterSafe plumbing assurance scheme to ensure the quality of workmanship is maintained to the highest standards.

### 3. Fittings Approval Schemes

We actively promote the use of approved fittings and materials to ensure full compliance of the Regulations.

## Our enforcement policy

This policy is to ensure a consistent approach on enforcing these Regulations within our area of supply.

### Aims and purpose of the Policy

We're committed to the following;

- Enforcing the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 under section 74 of the Water Industry Act 1991.
- Reducing the risk to public health from contaminated water (both within premises and in the wider water supply network).
- Preventing any onsite contamination of water supplied for domestic purposes.
- Making sure all materials and fittings used by the customer are compliant with the Regulations.
- Proactively engage with the water industry and national bodies to maintain our understanding of best practice.
- Protecting assets owned by Severn Trent Water.

Enforcement can range from providing advice all the way through to prosecution and court action, although we believe prevention is better than cure. We provide information, advice and guidance to customers on their responsibilities and the best way to make sure the Regulations are followed.

## Our approach

### Contacting our Customers

We try to contact our customers before undertaking an inspection. Prior notice may not be given if we have information that a serious breach of the Regulations has been committed.

### The Inspection

We'll undertake a risk assessment of your plumbing system to ensure compliance with the Regulations. Where contraventions are identified, our technician will discuss these with you and issue a formal rectification notice/proforma. A formal letter and contraventions report will follow shortly after confirming the required actions.

A follow up visit will be arranged to make sure the contraventions have been put right. This may not be needed if an approved plumber has undertaken the work and issued a certificate in accordance with the Regulations to confirm your plumbing system complies.

For the more serious contraventions, it may be necessary to disconnect your water supply immediately and we may also take enforcement, including prosecution, in addition to requiring you to take action within specified timescales to remedy the contravention.

A full list of approved plumbers can be found at [stwater.co.uk/watermark](http://stwater.co.uk/watermark) or [watersafe.org.uk](http://watersafe.org.uk)

If you fail to carry out the work(s) specified within the agreed timeframe, it's likely that we'll exercise our powers under the Water Industry Act 1991 which may include one or more of the following;

- Rectification of the contravention(s)  
(We'll instruct a nominated contractor to undertake the rectification works and recharge all associated costs back to you).
- Disconnect your water supply.
- Formal caution.
- Prosecution.

In the event that we have to incur costs relating to any of the above enforcement activities, this will be recharged back to the customer.

### Warning Letters

These are sent if the informal approach has not worked but a caution or prosecution is not thought to be appropriate.

### Formal Caution

We may agree in some circumstances to issue a formal caution where there has been a breach of the Regulations. This is not a criminal conviction but it is a written acceptance that an offence has been committed. It may be brought to the attention of the Court if we prosecute for further breaches in the future.

## Prosecution

Prosecution will generally be reserved for the most serious cases. Before going down this route, we'll apply the same tests that the Crown Prosecution Service (code for crown prosecutors) use in deciding whether to bring a case to court.

The following factors will be considered:

- The seriousness of the alleged offence.
- The severity and scale of potential or actual harm.
- Any explanation offered.
- The willingness to prevent it happening again.
- Whether those involved have broken the rules before and how willing they were to put things right.
- Whether other action would be more appropriate or effective.
- Deterrent effect of the prosecution on the offender and others.

## Penalties

Failure to comply with Regulations is a criminal offence and attracts a fine not exceeding £1,000.

## Powers of Entry

We have the right to enter a business or home at any reasonable time of day. We have to give the occupier 24 hours notice, although this may not be necessary in an emergency.

Stopping an authorised employee from entering a property is an offence and anyone found guilty could be fined up to £1,000.

If our employees are stopped from entering a property, the company (Severn Trent Water) may get a court warrant. This allows entry to be made by force if necessary.

## Publicity

If a person or business is found guilty in court of breaching the Regulations, we'll consider publicising the conviction. This could be through the media or our own publications, website or social media.

The aim would be to draw attention to the Regulations, the need to follow them and to deter anyone tempted to break them.

## Your right to appeal

As a regulatory body, Severn Trent Water is accountable for its actions.

To make a complaint, please email [customer care@severntrent.co.uk](mailto:customer care@severntrent.co.uk) or write to:  
Severn Trent Water Ltd  
PO Box 5309  
Coventry  
CV3 9FH

## Severn Trent Water – Area of Supply (Map)



## Key Contacts

### Water Fittings Regulations Duty Desk

Tel: **01332 683 711**

Email: **[water.regulations@severntrent.co.uk](mailto:water.regulations@severntrent.co.uk)**

### WaterMark

Tel: **01332 683 711**

Email: **[watermark@severntrent.co.uk](mailto:watermark@severntrent.co.uk)**

Web: **[stwater.co.uk/watermark](http://stwater.co.uk/watermark)**

### WaterSafe

Tel: **0333 207 9030**

Email: **[info@watersafe.org.uk](mailto:info@watersafe.org.uk)**

Web: **[watersafe.org.uk](http://watersafe.org.uk)**

### Water Regulations Advisory Scheme (WRAS)

Tel: **0333 207 9030**

Email: **[info@wras.co.uk](mailto:info@wras.co.uk)**

Web: **[wras.co.uk](http://wras.co.uk)**