

SEVERN

TRENT

WATER

Our Guaranteed Service Standards

Code of practice



The standards of service you can expect from us



Contents

1. Our Codes of Practice	3
2. How can I tell you about your service?	4
3. What are your guarantees of service to me?	5
4. How and when will you pay me if you do not meet a standard?	7
5. Are there circumstances when you won't make a payment?	7
6. Do you review your service standards?	7
7. What happens if I have a dispute?	8
8. Who regulates the service that you provide?	10
9. I have individual needs – how can you help?	11
10. Bogus callers	11
11. How can I contact you?	16

We work hard to ensure that we deliver an excellent service to you. We back this up with service guarantees and payments to you if we fail to meet the required standard. Some of our guarantees are set by Government regulations but we also have our own guarantees to make sure that we focus on services which you have told us you value most.

1. 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 (with the exception of pipe-laying powers) by the Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat), the water industry's economic regulator. From time to time we may revise the Codes and update them to include developments and improvements in services to you.

This leaflet sets out our Code of Practice relating to our Guaranteed Service Standards and is applicable to domestic and business customers. Separate leaflets are available that deal with other aspects of our full company Code of Practice. These are:

- Metering your water supply
- Your water supply
- Dealing with used water
- Leakage
- Your bill (this includes our debt code)
- What to do if you are unhappy with our service
- Pipe-laying powers.

You can get copies of these leaflets by downloading them from stwater.co.uk or by telephoning our Customer Contact Centre on **0345 750 0500**.

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

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

2. How can I tell you about your service?

We aim to provide an excellent customer service so please get in touch with us if something is wrong. We are here to help, even if you just need some information.

If our service falls short of your expectations, we want you to tell us. We welcome comments from you that allow us to learn and improve and we want to deal with things quickly and effectively.

We have contact centres across the region which are organised so that the staff are experienced specialists in a particular field. This ensures that you speak to someone who is best placed to deal with your enquiry.

For enquiries about your water bill call our Customer Contact Centre on **0345 750 0500**. Our staff are available Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm and Saturday 8am to 1pm. Calls are charged at the local call rate.



3. What are your guarantees of service to me?

We work hard to ensure that we deliver an excellent service to you. We back this up with service guarantees and payments to you if we fail to meet the required standard. You can find the amount that we will pay you and the number of working days within which you can expect to receive a payment by looking at the information below and the tables on pages 11 and 12. We also publish an outline of the standards and associated payments on the back of our bills.

Some of our guarantees are set by government regulations but we also have our own guarantees to make sure that we focus on services which you have told us you value most. All of our guarantees are listed below.

We guarantee the following specific standards of service:

- **Making and keeping written/telephone appointments**

If you need an appointment with us we promise to:

1. Offer you an a.m. or p.m. appointment or, if you request it, an appointment within a two-hour time-slot.
2. Give you 24 hours notice if we need to cancel an appointment that we have made with you.
3. Keep all non-cancelled appointments that we make with you.

If we do not meet these promises you may be entitled to a payment.

- **Account queries**

If you write to us to query the accuracy of your bill we will provide you with a response within five working days of receiving your letter. However, should we take longer than 10 working days, you may qualify for a payment.

- **Payment arrangements**

If you ask us to change your payment method and we cannot meet your request, we will let you know why within five working days of receiving your letter. If we do not, you may qualify for a payment.

- **Complaints**

If you make a written complaint about our water or sewerage services we will respond within 10 working days of receiving your letter. However, should we take longer than 10 working days, you may qualify for a payment.

- **Interruption of your water supply for planned works**

If we plan to do maintenance or repairs to our water mains we may have to turn off your water supply. If we know this will take longer than four hours, we will give you at least two days advance notice in writing and tell you when the supply will be interrupted and restored. If we fail to provide you with two days' notice before a planned interruption you may qualify for a payment.

We do not have to provide advance notice if we have to do emergency repairs and need to turn your water supply off, for example, when we have a burst water main.

- **Restoration of your water supply for planned works**

If we have interrupted your supply we will restore it by the time promised on the warning card or letter that we have delivered to you. If we do not you may be entitled to a payment. For each further complete 24 hours you are without water you will be entitled to an additional payment.

- **Interruptions in an emergency**

If there has been an unplanned interruption, for example due to a burst main, we will restore the supply within 12 hours. If the leak or burst is on a strategic water main we will restore the supply within 48 hours. If we do not meet these targets you may be entitled to a payment. For each further complete 24 hours you are without water you will be entitled to an additional payment.

- **Flooding from sewers**

In rare circumstances some properties suffer from internal flooding from our sewers. If it is our fault you will be entitled to a payment that is equal to your annual sewerage charges (with a minimum of £150 and maximum of £1,000) for each flooding incident.

If you are affected by external flooding you may be entitled to a payment that is equal to 50% of your annual sewerage charges (minimum of £75 and maximum of £500).

You can request our 'Floodcare' leaflet by calling our Customer Contact Centre on **0345 750 0500**. The leaflet gives more details about these circumstances.

- **Poor pressure**

If you experience particularly low pressure under normal operating conditions you may be entitled to a payment. You are entitled to one payment in any financial year (1 April – 31 March). You will qualify if the pressure in our service pipe falls below seven metres head of water, for longer than an hour, twice in 28 consecutive days. However, if the low water pressure is a result of necessary routine or emergency maintenance work on our systems, you will not be entitled to a payment.

- **Emergency water restrictions**

If we have to interrupt or cut off essential supplies because of a drought we will pay you for each day or part of a day that you are affected. The maximum payment will be the cost of your household water bill in the previous year. If you are a business customer we will pay you up to a maximum of your previous annual water bill or £500 if no water charges were paid or a third party is responsible for the water charges.

We will not pay if, in the opinion of Ofwat, the circumstances are so exceptional that the interruption or cut-off could not reasonably have been avoided.

- **Boil water notices or do not drink notices**

In the unlikely event that the water we supply does not reach its usual high standard, we may issue a 'boil water' or 'do not drink' notice in writing. If this happens we will make a payment. However, if the problem occurs on your private supply pipe you will not be entitled to a payment. We will not pay if the circumstances are exceptional (see Section 5).

4. How and when will you pay me if you do not meet a standard?

If we are aware that we have caused a problem, we will make service guarantee payments to you automatically within 10 or 20 working days depending on the circumstances. If we fail to do this we will make an additional penalty payment in line with the values and timescales described in the tables on pages 12 to 15.

We will pay automatically if we know that there has been a problem. If you think that you should have received a payment please contact us on **0345 750 0500** because we may not know about it. Please do this within three months of the problem occurring.

5. Are there circumstances when you won't make a payment?

In some rare and exceptional circumstances we may not be able to meet our standards because of events that are beyond our control. If this happens our service guarantees do not apply and payments may not be due. Examples include:

- Severe weather
- Industrial action
- Third party action
- Actions or equipment for which you are responsible.

If you are unsure about whether you should be paid please contact our Customer Operations Service Centre on **0800 783 4444**.

There are some other circumstances which are specific to each standard. These can be found by looking at the tables on pages 12 to 15.

Payments under our service guarantee scheme do not affect your legal rights and they do not mean that we admit liability.

6. Do you review your service standards?

Yes; we ask a sample of customers what they think of our service each year and we also invite feedback from anyone who is not in the sample. We use the information we gather to make more improvements in our service to you.

As well as the service guarantees, we have set other standards to make sure that our service is as good as you expect it to be. We continuously review these standards and compare them against other companies who provide services to you.

7. What happens if I have a dispute?

We understand that if something goes wrong you want us to resolve it quickly. If you make a complaint we will follow our complaints procedure which is set out in our leaflet 'What to do if you are unhappy with our service'. You can request this by contacting us or by visiting stwater.co.uk.

CCWater will 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 complaints procedures. They will also advise you if the matter you have raised is a dispute that can be settled by our regulator, Ofwat. You can contact CCWater at:

Consumer Council for Water
1st Floor Victoria Square House Victoria Square
Birmingham
B2 4AJ
0121 345 1017 or **0845 702 3953**
ccwater.org.uk

There are certain types of dispute where Ofwat can decide the outcome and certain types where an independent arbitrator can be appointed. Ofwat can settle:

- Any dispute about whether or not you are entitled to a payment under the Guaranteed Service Standards scheme.
- Any dispute about the cost of, security for payment for, or the terms of certain conditions of, connection to a water main.
- Any dispute arising from us telling you that you are required to have a separate supply to your existing one (by serving you a Section 64 notice). This will depend on which part of the Section 64 notice we have used to serve on you.
- Any dispute about maintaining pressure and supply or the effectiveness and capacity of your water tank.
- Disputes regarding water meters, for example:
 - Whether it is practical or unreasonably expensive to install a meter.
- The terms and conditions for a non-domestic supply – Disputes regarding requisitioning of water mains or public sewers (including public lateral drains), for example:
 - Any dispute about the amount we ask you to pay or the undertakings or securities we expect you to give.

- Any dispute about our proposal to extend to greater than three months the period which we are given to provide a water main after you ask for it, or about the point where a service pipe will connect with the main.
 - Any dispute about our proposal to extend to greater than six months the period which we are given to provide a public sewer after you ask for it, or about the places where private drains and sewers will connect with the public sewer.
 - Any appeals about the adoption of sewers or sewage works and certain other sewerage disputes. These can include disputes about your right to make a physical connection to such sewers, our request for alterations to a proposed drainage system or our decision to close or place restrictions on the use of a public sewer.
 - The terms and conditions for the adoption of a self-laid main. – The charges or disconnection costs that must be paid to a company before a business customer’s supply is reconnected.
 - A refusal to allow private sewers and drains to be connected to public sewers, or a requirement to inspect the drain or sewer before allowing a connection.
 - The costs and security a company asks for when it connects premises to a sewer.
 - The charges and conditions for providing a sewer (requisition).
 - A proposal or refusal to adopt sewers or sewage disposal works, or about the conditions in an adoption agreement.
 - The position or suitability of a drain or sewer to replace an existing private drainage system which the company considers to be unsuitable.
 - The effectiveness of an alternative sewer that has been provided to replace an existing one that is due to be closed.
 - A requirement that a proposed drain or sewer is built so it can become part of a general sewerage system.
 - Appeals from occupiers of trade premises who are not happy with a refusal or the conditions set by sewerage companies about putting their trade effluent into the public sewer.
- In the case of street works, if there is a dispute about compensation after we have done work in the street and we cannot agree on an arbitrator, Ofwat can decide upon one. Other disputes which can be referred to arbitration include:
- The location of the meter installation.
 - The costs of installing the meter if the company asks the customer to pay.

8. Who regulates the service that you provide?

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

Defra lays down the standards of quality of drinking water which include the European Commission's requirements. It also ensures that we comply with these standards.

Ofwat

Ofwat is the economic regulator of the industry whose statutory duties include protecting customers' interests. Ofwat has the power to restrict the increases we can make in our water and sewerage charges, set the levels of service we must provide and stipulate the information we must give to you.



You can contact Ofwat at:
Centre City Tower
7 Hill Street
Birmingham
B5 4UA
Or call **0121 644 7500**

The Environment Agency (EA)

The EA is responsible for controlling the pollution of rivers, draining land, controlling floods and issuing fishing licences. The EA regulates how much water we may take from the rivers and other inland and underground sources for water supply and our return of the water to rivers after it has been used and treated.



Contact the EA at:
The Environment Agency
Sapphire House East
550 Streetsbrook Road
Solihull
B91 1QT
Or call **0370 850 6506**

The Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI)

The DWI acts as a technical assessor for the Government on the monitoring, recording and reporting of drinking water quality. It carries out technical audits of companies, investigates incidents, initiates actions to achieve compliance with legal requirements and provides expert advice to the Government on drinking water policy. It also oversees improvement schemes that companies like us are legally committed to implement.



You can contact the DWI at:
Drinking Water Inspectorate
Area 4a
Ergon House
Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 2AL
Telephone: **030 0068 6400**
Facsimile: **030 0068 6401**
Email: dwi.enquiries@defra.gsi.gov.uk

9. 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 **0345 750 0500**. We will take your details and arrange for our Access team to contact you or send you an Access information pack.

10. Bogus callers

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. For more information about this contact your local police service.

If a Severn Trent Water employee asks to come into your home, they will show you a valid identification card bearing our logo, their name and a photograph. You can check their identity by calling **0345 604 1655** 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.

In an effort to combat bogus callers we have introduced a doorstep password protection scheme which is available to all customers. For more information please download our 'Are they genuine?' leaflet from stwater.co.uk or telephone **0345 750 0500** to request a copy. If you use a textphone you can also contact us on **0800 328 1115**.



Guaranteed Service Standard or Company Standard	How much will you pay me if you do not meet the guaranteed standard?	How quickly will you make the automatic payment to me?
Making appointments	£20 (Household) £20 (Business)	Within 10 working days
Keeping appointments	£20 (Household) £20 (Business)	Within 10 working days
Responding to written account queries	£20 (Household) £20 (Business)	Within 10 working days
Responding to written requests to change your payment method	£20 (Household) £20 (Business)	Within 5 working days
Responding to written complaints	£20 (Household) £20 (Business)	Within 10 working days
Giving you notice of planned interruptions to your water supply	£20 (Household) £50 (Business)	Within 20 working days
Restoring your supply when we say we will after a planned interruption	£20 (Household) £50 (Business) And for each extra complete 24 hours you are without water: £10 (Household) £25 (Business)	Within 20 working days

How much will you pay me if you do not pay me in the time you stated?

Are there any times when you won't pay?

£10 (Household)
£10 (Business)

When it is not in connection with the supply of water or sewerage services.
In exceptional circumstances (severe weather, industrial action or the action of a third party).

£10 (Household)
£10 (Business)

If you cancel the appointment.
If we cancel with more than 24 hours' notice.
In exceptional circumstances (severe weather, industrial action or the action of a third party).

£10 (Household)
£10 (Business)

If you do not want to continue with the enquiry.
If the enquiry is sent to the wrong company address.
If the query is frivolous.
In exceptional circumstances (severe weather, industrial action or the action of a third party).

£10 (Household)
£10 (Business)

If you do not want to continue with the enquiry.
If the enquiry is sent to the wrong company address.
If the query is frivolous.
In exceptional circumstances (severe weather, industrial action or the action of a third party).

£10 (Household)
£10 (Business)

If you do not want to continue with the complaint.
If the enquiry is sent to the wrong company address.
If the query is frivolous.
In exceptional circumstances (severe weather, industrial action or the action of a third party).

£20 (Household)
£50 (Business)

If it is impractical for us to identify you as being affected and you don't claim within three months of the incident.
In exceptional circumstances (industrial action or the action of a third party).

£20 (Household)
£50 (Business)

If it is impractical for us to identify you as being affected and you don't claim within three months of the incident.
In exceptional circumstances (severe weather, industrial action or the action of a third party).

Guaranteed Service Standard or Company Standard	How much will you pay me if you do not meet the guaranteed standard?	How quickly will you make the automatic payment to me?
Restoring your supply after an emergency supply interruption	£30 (Household) £50 (Business) And for each extra complete 24 hours you are without water: £10 (Household) £25 (Business)	Within 20 working days
Repeat interruptions to supply, 3 or more incidents >15 hours	£30 (Household) £50 (Business)	Within 20 working days of receipt of your claim
Dealing with sewer flooding (inside your property)	A payment that is equal to your annual sewerage charges up to a maximum of £1,000 (minimum £500) for each flooding incident	Within 20 working days
Dealing with sewer flooding (outside your property)	A payment that is equal to 50% of your annual sewerage charges up to a maximum of £500 (minimum £75) for each flooding incident	Within 20 working days
Providing you with adequate water pressure	£20 (Household) £25 (Business)	
Making emergency restrictions on water use	£10 per day/part day (Household) up to the amount of your water bill for the last financial year £50 per day/part day (Business) up to the amount of your water bill for the last financial year or £500	
Issuing a boil water notice	£25 (Household) £50 (Business)	

How much will you pay me if you do not pay me in the time you stated?

Are there any times when you won't pay?

£20 (Household)
£50 (Business)

If it is impractical to identify you as being affected and you don't claim within three months of the incident.
In exceptional circumstances (severe weather, industrial action or the action of a third party).

£20 (Household)
£50 (Business)

You must make a claim for the payment within 3 months of the incident.

£20 (Household)
£50 (Business)

If it is impractical to identify you as being affected and you don't claim within three months of the incident.
If your actions have caused the problem.
If your private drains or sewers are inadequate.
In exceptional circumstances (severe weather or industrial action).

£10 (Household)
£10 (Business)

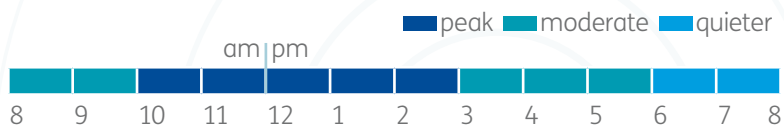
If your actions have caused the problem.
If your private drains or sewers are inadequate.
In exceptional circumstances (severe weather or industrial action).
If it is impractical to identify you as being affected and you don't claim within three months of the incident.
If you are not materially affected.
If we have already made a payment for internal flooding for the same incident.

If we have already made a payment with in the financial year.
If the low pressure is because of necessary works.
If it is impractical to identify you as being affected and you don't claim within three months of the incident.
In exceptional circumstances (industrial action or the action of a third party).
If we don't know about the problem.

If, in Ofwat's opinion, the circumstances are so exceptional that the interruption or restriction could not have been reasonably avoided.

If the problem is because of something on your private supply pipe.
In circumstances beyond our control.

Customer Contact Centre peak times



11. Contact numbers and addresses

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 stwater.co.uk



For general enquiries or complaints about your bill, please contact our Customer Contact Centre on **0345 750 0500**

8.00 am to 8.00 pm Monday to Friday

8.00 am to 1.00 pm Saturday



You can also email customercare@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 (water/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: **0800 783 4444**.

The centre is operational 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The postal address is:



Severn Trent Water Ltd
Customer Relations,
PO Box 5310,
Coventry
CV3 9FJ



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

Our headquarters are located at:



Severn Trent Centre
2 St. John's Street,
Coventry
CV1 2LZ

Please note that if you are calling from a landline, our 0800 numbers are free of charge, our 02477 number is charged at the local rate and our 0845 number is charged at your operator's rate.

Calls made from mobile phones will be charged at your operator's rates.

If you would like to make an enquiry regarding your bill and your bill is issued by South Staffordshire Water

or

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, liaise with us and make 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
1st Floor Victoria Square House
Victoria Square,
Birmingham
B2 4AJ



0121 345 1017



ccwater.org.uk

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

For further information:



Call **0345 750 0500**

Textphone **0800 328 1155**



customercare@severntrent.co.uk

Calls to 0800 numbers are free from UK landlines. Calls to 0345 numbers are charged at a local rate and when phoning from a mobile, may be included in your free minutes package.

ST.WM.000078.C

Severn Trent Water Ltd

PO Box 5309

Coventry

CV3 9FH

www.stwater.co.uk

SEVERN

TRENT

WATER