



Metering Matters – A guide to our installation policy

Severn Trent
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TRENT

Customer guidance for our water meter installation policy

We have created this guide to provide support to customers who have queries about new water meter installations.

Why we install meters

We supply and fit water meters free of charge (in nearly all cases), to help you save water and receive more accurate bills.

Benefits of having a water meter

A water meter measures the amount of water you use, so you will only pay for what you're using. It can also help save water - many customers find that their bills are cheaper after switching to a water meter as they make a conscious effort to use less once they have a meter fitted, meaning it's a benefit for both your pocket and the environment. Using less water means less needs to be heated, so it can also save on your energy bills and reduce the carbon footprint.

You can trial a water meter for two years, and if you feel like it isn't right for you during that time you can switch back to unmetered billing, however your meter will not be removed from the property.

If you'd like to see if having a meter may benefit you and save you money, you can check the [CCW calculator](#).

Choosing to switch to a water meter

You can choose to switch to a water meter at any time, if you are a tenant and your tenancy is longer than 6 months, you do not need to gain permission from your landlord to have a water meter installed, but we do suggest that you notify them out of courtesy.

If you have a short-term lease of less than 6 months, you must get written permission from your landlord.

To apply for a meter installation, you can:

- Get in touch with our team through any of our contact channels here: www.stwater.co.uk/help-and-contact/contact-us/
- Fill out the water meter application form at www.stwater.co.uk/my-account/my-water-meter/apply-for-a-water-meter/
- Or you can call us on 0345 7500 500.

Sometimes we're unable to install a meter

We will install a meter free of charge if it is reasonably practical. We define "reasonably practical" as not having to move large items such as household appliances or any other access issues.

However, there are circumstances in which we're unable to install a meter.

We will not move a stop tap to install a meter.

If the boundary box is in the middle of a busy road, which the council or local authority are unable to close, we will not be able to install the meter.

When we can't fit an external meter

We will be unable to install an external meter if:

- You're on a joint supply with someone else
- You have a leak on your supply
- There are hazards nearby, such as cables or other utilities, making it unsafe to install
- There is an obstruction in the way, such as a tree or lamppost
- The local authority will not allow any street works on a newly resurfaced highway. This is known as a Section 58. If this is in place, we are unable to dig the tarmac

When we can't fit an internal meter

We will be unable to install an internal meter if:

- The internal stop tap doesn't work
- You don't have an internal stop tap.
- The pipework inside your property is inaccessible, obstructed or in poor condition.
- Your property has more than two points where the water supply enters the building
- You live in a flat and have access to communal facilities or a shared hot water supply.

What happens if we can't fit a meter

Should we find that we are unable to fit the meter when at your property, if this is the case, you might be eligible for one of our assessed charge tariffs. These are based on the type of home you live in, for example a flat or terraced/semi-detached/ detached property.

If you live alone, where no children, partner or any other individual is living at the property, you may also be entitled to our Single Occupier Assessed Charge Tariff.

To be eligible for any of these tariffs you must have had an unsuccessful meter fit.

For more information please call us on 03457 500500.

Applying for a water meter

If you submitted your application over the phone, you can also book your appointment slot there and then with the advisor.

If you apply online, you can choose a time slot that suits you for when we will call you back in order to book an appointment slot.

The application is designed to calculate whether you would save money from having a water meter installed.

We will never knowingly advise you to get a water meter installed unless it would save you money.

Once the meter has been installed by our meter contract partners, you will be given a "Welcome to Metering" pack which will explain the billing cycle and the benefits of the water meter as well as water efficiency tips.

We'll regularly read your water meter

We aim to read your meter every six months, if we are unable to read the meter, we will calculate an estimated reading based upon previous consumption.

If your meter is external, we will read this visually at your boundary box.

If your meter is inside of your property, we will take a reading either by a drive by radio read, or you may have a touchpad outside of your property so we don't have to disturb you when we take the meter reading.

If for any reason either of these options aren't possible, our meter readers will knock your door and check if it's convenient to read your meter.

If you aren't in, we will leave a calling card at your property to let you know we've visited.

If you want to, you can enter a meter reading online more frequently than that to help keep track of your water use.

How you'll be charged

You will be charged 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.

We'll only recommend you switch to a meter if it'll save you money

We will not recommend that you have a meter unless we're sure you will save money.

If you live on your own, have a small family, or live in a house with a high Rateable Value it could be beneficial to have your bills based on the actual volume of water you use rather than by the Rateable Value.

You can use the Consumer Council for Water's water meter calculator to work out if a meter is the best option for you at www.ccwater.org.uk/watermetercalculator/.

Having a meter does not exclude you from temporary restrictions on non-essential use (hosepipe bans) to safeguard essential supplies. Hosepipe bans cover both metered and unmetered customers.

Having a meter may also be used to enable you to access some of our financial support schemes, so even if you have higher than average water use you may still benefit from having a meter installed. This will vary depending on individual circumstances.

Full details of our financial support options can be found online at www.stwater.co.uk/financial-suport.

You should have a water meter if you:

- Use a garden sprinkler or any other automatic watering devices.
- Have a swimming pool or pond over 10,000 litres capacity that is self-replenishing.
- Are a business customer.

A handheld hosepipe without a sprinkler does not need to be metered. However, a perforated hose is classified as a sprinkling device and therefore requires a meter before it can be used.

How Rateable Value is calculated

The Rateable Value is the measure used to calculate the size of the water bill on unmetered properties.

Rateable Value is not directly related to actual water used as it is an estimate.

Rateable Values were decided by the government between 1973 and 1990.

Rateable Value includes several factors such as size of property, area and availability of services.

It is no longer possible to find how individual calculations were created. These Rateable Values were frozen in 1990 and are now fixed and can't be appealed. If a house was built since 1990 it should have a water meter.

For example, if you live alone in a large house you would very likely benefit from a meter installation as you would expect to use less than the estimated amount water and therefore would reduce your bills.

A full guide explaining Rateable Value can be found online at www.stwater.co.uk/rateable-value.

Where we'll install your water meter

Government regulations permit us to try and install the meter in three locations:

1. Outside your property next to the stop tap, near the property boundary. This is usually inside the boundary box and is our preferred option.
2. Outside the property, adjacent to the property wall.
3. Inside your property, with a radio-read facility.

If you disagree with the proposed location of the water meter on the arrival of our metering contractor, you must pay for the extra costs of installation caused by the new location. The extra costs will be confirmed with you before any work has started.

If your property is more than 50 metres from our main, then we must install the meter at the start of your supply pipe. This is usually at the highway boundary.

You have the right to appeal to Ofwat if you're unhappy about where the meter is fitted. Visit www.ofwat.gov.uk for details.

Installing a meter in the boundary box

Installing the meter outside the home, in the boundary box, is our preferred option.

If you have an accessible boundary box, our metering contractor will install a 'screw-in' water meter.

If there is no accessible boundary box or we're unable to find the stop tap, we may arrange a second visit for a team to come back and build an accessible boundary box or find the stop tap, then install the meter.

Installing a meter inside the home

If it's not possible to install the meter at the point of supply at the boundary box, we will attempt to fit a meter internally.

We'll install it as close to where the water supply enters your property as possible.

Often this is under your kitchen sink but may be in a downstairs bathroom or in another location.

If none of the three methods are possible, you will not be able to have a water meter.

You can go back to unmetered bills

If you find that a water meter isn't right for you, you can change back to unmetered charges.

You must contact our team at www.stwater.co.uk/contact-us within 24 months of the meter being installed or within 30 days of your fourth bill to let us know that you want to change back to unmetered charges.

If you paid for your meter to be installed before 1 April 2001 you may be able to revert to an unmetered charge.

This can be done if **all** the following apply:

- You originally requested the meter and paid for the installation, still live at the property, you're named on the billing account and you're asking to go back to Rateable Value.
- The property has a valid Rateable Value from 31 March 1990.
- The property is used as a home
- There have been no substantial alterations to the property that would invalidate the Rateable Value, like an extension or change of use, since the Rateable Value was set.
- There is no swimming pool and no automatic watering device or sprinklers at the property.

Instances when you can't go back to unmetered charges

If the property is a business, or if we have fitted a meter under our compulsory metering scheme, you cannot go back to an unmetered charge under any circumstances.

If you moved into a property where there was already a meter installed, we will not be able to remove this and bill you on unmetered charges so please ensure you check this prior to buying your property.

We own the meter

Legally, the water meter is an asset that belongs to Severn Trent. It must not be removed or be instructed to be removed by you under any circumstances.

Tampering with the meter is a contravention of Section 175 of the Water Industry Act 1991. It can be a criminal offence to interfere with, wilfully damage or remove the meter.

If you are convicted of doing any of these things, you could face a large fine.

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

Moving the meter after installation

You'll need to contact us at www.stwater.co.uk/contact-us if you want to have the meter moved after it has been installed.

We will arrange for our metering contractors to visit the property and carry out a survey.

If you decide to go ahead with having the meter moved then you will be charged for the cost of moving it, unless you have specific needs or require assistance.

We will confirm any costs associated with moving the meter before any work starts.

The cost of the move will be determined by one of our contractors when they survey the property.

If the meter is an unsafe location then we will move it free of charge. However, we cannot move a meter 50 meters or more away from the existing installation point.

Accuracy of water meters

Water meters are approved for accuracy by the Office for Product Safety & Standards, as well as the manufacturer, before leaving the factory.

Our metering contractors will show you how to read the meter after it has been installed.

Requesting a water meter test

You can request for meters to be tested if you think it might be inaccurate.

The meter will be replaced and sent back to the manufacturer for testing on specially calibrated equipment by an independent measuring company to confirm the meter's accuracy.

Paying for the test

If the meter is confirmed to be inaccurate, you will not be charged for the test.

If the independent checkers find that that meter is accurate, you will be charged for the test.

Tests vary by the size and type of the meter, but a typical meter test will cost £70 plus VAT.

Refunds and certificates

If the meter has over-recorded, we will refund you with the amount we estimate has been overcharged on their latest bill. If it has under-recorded, we will not claim anything back from you.

If the meter has been proven to be accurate then we will receive a certificate from the testers, which we will pass on to you.

No meters have over-recorded

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.

We sometimes decide to test meters if we believe it is necessary, for example if we believe that the consumption is lower than expected.

We will pay for these tests and will inform you of any outcome if it is not accurate.

How we can support you and your family

We understand that sometimes you or your family may need long term support.

We are able to provide tailored support for you and your household if you join our Priority Services Register at www.stwater.co.uk/priority.

This is a free service and means we can learn a bit more about you and help us understand your specific needs.

Our Priority Service Register is here to support everyone, whether you or a family member are facing ill-health, financial worries, language barriers or physical/psychological ill-health.

We are here to try and provide some support to you and your family during that period.

Contact us if you have any questions

You can contact our team at www.stwater.co.uk/contact-us if you have any questions about our metering policy, our team will be happy to help you. You can also read our Metering Matters – Fixing any Fault guidance at www.stwater.co.uk/help-and-contact/legal/customer-policies, which explains how and when we're able to help with problems regarding a water meter.