



code of practice

# Water Metering: A guide for household customers

This leaflet forms part of our Customer Code of Practice, which provides a guide to the services we provide for household customers. It has been approved by the Water Services Regulation Authority, Ofwat.

Further leaflets are available and details are provided towards the back of this leaflet.

## Introduction

### Water Metering – an option that makes sense

Many South East Water customers already pay for their water supply based on a water meter, and we have embarked on a major programme to install water meters for all of our unmetered customers by 2020.

But you don't need to wait if you think you could save money now with a water meter.

This leaflet explains how water metering works, and will help you to calculate whether you could save money by asking us to fit a meter, free of charge, at your home now.



## What is a water meter?

The meter is a mechanical device fitted on your water supply pipe to record how much water you use.



## How are the charges calculated?

Metered bills are issued twice each year, and the charges come in two parts:

- › **Standing charge**
- › **Charge based on the actual quantity of water used and recorded by the meter**

Bills can also be paid in monthly instalments on a budget payment plan. For details of the current year's charges please refer to our website [www.southeastwater.co.uk](http://www.southeastwater.co.uk).

We measure water in cubic metres (1 cubic metre = 220 gallons), but just how far does a cubic metre go?

**10 baths**

**4000 cups of tea**

**30 showers**

**2 hours running a hosepipe**

**100 toilet flushes**

**10 washing machine loads**

## Will I save money on my bills?

Every household is different, and only you will know how often you use your washing machine, how many baths you run, and so on, but research shows that customers who change to a meter use less water than they did previously. With a meter, lower usage means lower charges and our website has an online calculator to help you estimate your water use and see whether your metered charges would be lower than your current unmetered charges.

## Why should I have a water meter?

Conserving water in the home not only saves you money it also helps protect our valuable environment and countryside. South East Water provides your drinking water supply only, but our meter readings will also be used as the basis for your wastewater services too, potentially increasing any savings. If your wastewater services are provided by Thames Water, we will add the wastewater charges to your water bill. If they are provided by Southern Water, we will provide them with the meter readings we take, and they will send you a separate bill.

South East Water offers all its customers free water meters, with no charge for standard installations. A water meter enables you to pay based on the water you use, so, using water efficiently in the home and garden could lead to a significant reduction in your water bill, and your energy bills.

## How can I find out how much water I use?

The following table gives an idea of how much water you might use in a year, depending on the number of people in your household and your type of use, whether high, average or low.

Number of people in your household	Annual water use in cubic metres		
	High	Average	Low
1	145	84	39
2	198	137	87
3	242	171	110
4	267	195	131
5	290	233	150
6	314	256	186

## Where will a meter be fitted?

The standard location for a meter is in the pavement outside your property. If we are unable to install the meter here, we will look for an alternative location.



This will usually be inside the property, immediately after the internal stoptap, provided:

- › **The stoptap controls the water to the whole property**
- › **There is easy access to the pipe and the customer agrees to continue to provide access to allow meter readings to be carried out safely**
- › **There is sufficient space to install the meter, away from electrical and other domestic apparatus**
- › **The customer is prepared to allow an external touch-reader or radio read to be fitted in an accessible position for meter reading**

You may choose an alternative location that meets these criteria, provided you meet the additional cost of installation. In such cases, you must allow us access to the meter for reading and checking. Customers who have additional needs registered through our Service Plus scheme will not be charged.

## **I think I would like a water meter fitted, what happens next?**

If you complete the application form at the end of this leaflet or online at our website, we will arrange to survey your property to check if a meter can be fitted. If a meter can be fitted, we guarantee to complete the installation within three months of receiving your application. If we do not meet this timescale, we will adjust your account to ensure you are not financially worse off as a result of the delay.

## **What if I can't have a meter?**

It may not be practical for us to fit a meter at your property. This may be because the pipework at your property is complex or because there isn't a suitable location. In these circumstances we will inform you that we have been unable to fit the meter and will offer you the option of paying by Assessed Charge instead.

Assessed Charges are based on the number of bedrooms at the property, and only apply where we have tried to install a meter but have been unable to do so. Customers living alone can apply for our Single Occupier Assessed Charge.

## **What can I do if I think the meter is inaccurate?**

Water meters are very accurate, and are manufactured and tested to a British Standard specification. If you think your meter is not recording accurately, please call us to discuss – high readings can be a sign that there is a leak, or a faulty appliance or fitting and we may be able to help with this.

We can carry out a simple on-site test, free of charge, but if you would like to have the meter removed for independent testing, you will be asked to pay for the cost of this test, which is £70 plus VAT.

If the test showed that the meter was recording outside prescribed limits of error, we would refund the cost of the test and amend the bills for the last two meter readings.

## Can I refuse to have a meter?

All water companies have powers to insist on the installation of a meter in certain situations, examples of which are listed below:

- › **The main use of the premises is not a home**
- › **There is garden watering other than by hand (e.g. using a sprinkler)**
- › **Water is used for automatically replenishing a swimming pool**
- › **There is a change in occupancy of a dwelling**
- › **The premises are in an area of serious water stress, as designated by the government through the Secretary of State for the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)**

The South East of England has been designated an area of serious water stress, and the Government has approved our programme to install water meters for all customers by 2020. Customers cannot revert to unmetered charges when a meter is installed through our programme.

## I have a meter and use a lot of water, what can I do?

Water Industry Regulations provide protection to low income households that are metered and use a large amount of water as a result of family circumstances or certain medical conditions. The WaterSure tariff is operated by all water companies and to qualify, you must satisfy certain criteria. Further details are provided in our Code of Practice leaflet entitled Household Water Charges, Payment Options and Debt Recovery and a WaterSure application form can be downloaded from our website. You can also call us to discuss the tariff, and our contact details are provided at the back of this leaflet.

## Can I change back to unmetered charges?

South East Water has embarked on a major programme to install meters for all unmetered customers, free of charge, by 2020. You can apply to have a meter installed earlier than the date scheduled by the programme but you will be unable to revert to unmetered charges if the programme was scheduled to install your water meter during the following year.

The scheduled programme of metering installations is updated from time to time, and the current version can be viewed at [www.southeastwater.co.uk](http://www.southeastwater.co.uk)

## Meter reading

We aim to read your meter twice a year. If, for some reason, this is not possible, we guarantee that you will receive only one bill a year that is based on an estimated reading. When reading external meters, our meter reader should not normally need to enter your home, but may need access to your garden or grounds.

## Responsibility for pipes

The supply pipe from the external stop tap and/or external meter is your responsibility.

If you have an internal meter fitted, the supply pipe remains your responsibility.



**Key:** **A Supply pipe** – your responsibility (the pipe may run underneath the property)

**B Stop-tap** – this is the usual position of the Company stop-tap and meter (if an external meter is installed)

**C Communication pipe** – our responsibility

**D Water main** – our responsibility

**E Your property boundary**

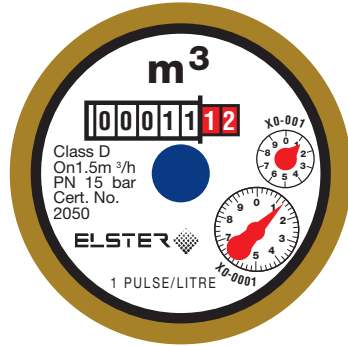


## How to read your meter

The meter we will install looks like this:



New water meter



### Example



In this example, the reading is 11 cubic metres of water and you would be billed for this. Only read the figures in the black boxes and please ignore the red numbers - these simply show the much smaller volumes of water used that make up a cubic metre.

Each meter has a unique serial number, which is printed on the meter casing just above the meter dials. This serial number also appears on your bill to identify and confirm which meter has been used to calculate your charges.

The black digits represent cubic metres ( $m^3$ ), and these are the ones that we use for charging. A cubic metre is 1000 litres. The white digits with a red background are hundreds and tens of litres, and are used for information only.

If your meter has been fitted externally, you will need to access the meter chamber, which is normally in the pavement outside your property.

Inside the chamber you will see a foam or plastic disc that protects the meter from frost. Take out the disc to take your reading. Check also that the serial number is the same as the one on your bill. Once you have read the meter, replace the foam disc back in the same position that you found it and replace the chamber lid.

## Checking for leakage

We recommend that you check your meter from time to time to make sure there is no leakage either internally, or on the external pipework. To do this:

- ▶ **Turn off your internal stop tap, which will usually be under the kitchen sink**
- ▶ **Look at the numbers on the meter dial, and watch to see whether they continue to move**
- ▶ **If they do, it may mean there is a leak on your supply pipe. Contact us as soon as possible, and we will investigate**

We have a Code of Practice on Leakage from customers' supply pipes, which is available from our website or by calling us. Our contact details are at the back of this leaflet.

## Maintenance

We are responsible for the maintenance of the meter, and we will repair or replace it free of charge if problems occur due to fair wear and tear.

You should not remove it yourself. This is because under the Water Act 1991 it can be a criminal offence to interfere with, wilfully damage or remove a water meter.

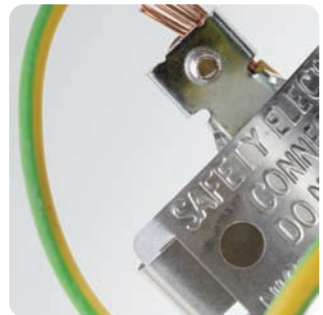
Please contact us if you think your meter has been damaged in anyway.

## Important Information Electrical earthing

If your property was built before 1966, it may still be earthed using the metal water supply pipe. This is no longer regarded as a safe method of insulation, and has been prohibited since 1966.

If your property is earthed in this way, the meter installation may affect the earthing system. As your earthing system is unknown to us, we strongly recommend that you contact your local electricity supplier or any approved electrical contractor. They may recommend that your earthing is checked, and are entitled to charge you for this service.

It is essential for your own safety to ensure that your property is correctly earthed, and this is the sole responsibility of the owner of the property. South East Water cannot accept any legal liability for damage or injury resulting from the use of a water supply pipe as a means of earthing.

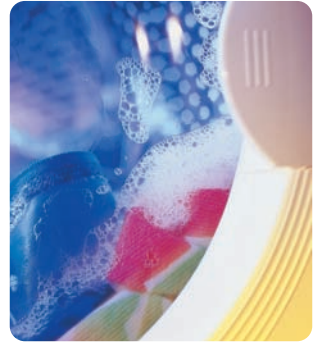




## **Are there ways I can save water?**

- › You could save 50 litres of water by switching to showering rather than taking a bath. It's quicker too – you can take a shower in less time than it takes to run a bath – sure to be a winner with the kids!
- › Avoid burst pipes and the water they waste by ensuring they are well lagged.

- › Only put the amount of water you actually need into the kettle. It will boil more rapidly, won't waste electricity, and you'll have your drink more quickly.
- › Put the plug in and wash your vegetables in a sink of water. Washing them under a running tap means clean water simply goes down the plughole.
- › Have fun with suds and sponges by washing the car using a bucket rather than a hose. Using a hose is the equivalent of over 30 buckets.
- › Always run your washing machine and dishwasher with a full load – it makes economic sense, saving both water and electricity. When buying a new machine, opt for one of the new water efficient models which could save over 5,000 litres of water a year.
- › One third of all water used in the home is flushed down the toilet. Use a cistern displacement device such as a save-a-flush bag free from South East Water, or switch to a low-flush model. To receive a save-a-flush bag please visit our website or telephone our customer service team.
- › Your family could save a bathful of water every day by using a mug to rinse after teeth cleaning. Leaving the tap running wastes water.
- › Fix those dripping taps – you could save 90 litres of water from just one tap.



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



## **For more information about South East Water**

Our Customer Code of Practice Leaflets include:

- South East Water: Your water company**
- Water Metering: A guide for household customers**
- Household water charges, payment options and debt recovery**
- Leakage from customers' supply pipes**
- Service Plus: Our services for customers with additional needs**
- Guaranteed Standards of Service**
- What do I do if I have a complaint?**

## **Service Plus**

The information we provide is intended to be accessible to all customers.

Our code of practice leaflets are also available on request in alternative formats including large print, Braille and audio.

Please let us know if you have any special needs by contacting our customer service team and asking for our Service Plus leaflet. This is also available from our website **[www.southeastwater.co.uk](http://www.southeastwater.co.uk)**.

If your first language is not English we may be able to help you with our interpretation service when you call. Contact details are at the back of this leaflet.

# Application for a water meter for domestic customers

**PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM IN INK, USING BLOCK CAPITALS**

## **SECTION 1 - Account Holder(s)**

*(see note opposite)*

Customer Reference Number

*(at top right hand of your bill)*

Title: Surname: Forename:

Title: Surname: Forename:

Address to be metered *(as described on your bill)* Address for correspondence, if different:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: Postcode:

Tel No: *(see note 2 opposite)* Daytime: Evening:

Mobile: Email:

## **SECTION 2 - Compulsory Questions - Tenants only**

Are you a tenant at the property? *(If so, please complete the following questions)*  Yes  No

Do you pay your water bill directly to South East Water?  Yes  No

**Upon signing this application form you are confirming that, where necessary, you have the permission from the owner of the property / landlord to have the necessary works completed.**

**Please note, if you are a tenant it will not be possible to process your application unless all questions in this section are answered. You do not need to answer the questions in this section if you are not a tenant.**

## **SECTION 3 - Property Information**

Type of property?  Flat  Terraced  Semi-detached  Detached  Other

Number of occupiers? *(see Note 3 opposite)*

Number of bedrooms? *(see Note 3 opposite)*

Where is your internal stop tap located?

Do you have an outside tap?  Yes  No  Don't know

Do you share any water supply with your neighbours, e.g. communal gardens, shared heating, hot water, etc.  Yes  No  Don't know

Do you have a permanently installed water softener?  Yes  No  Don't know

## NOTES

1. The application should normally be completed and signed by the account holder.  
You may also sign if:
  - (a) You are not the account holder but are a tenant at the property, or if
  - (b) You are signing on behalf of the account holder (in this case, please state in what capacity you are signing, e.g. spouse, legal representative, carer etc).
2. Any telephone number(s) provided on this form will only be used for the purposes of this application, or to contact you regarding your water services account. All other information supplied on this form will only be used for the purposes of this application.
3. If you presently pay your water services account by direct debit, or if you change to this method once the meter is fitted, then the number of occupiers/number of bedrooms will be taken into account when calculating a suggested monthly payment.

## SECTION 4 - Declaration

I confirm that I have read and understand my responsibilities on Electrical Earthing  
(see page 10 of this booklet).

I confirm that the above questionnaire has been answered to the best of my knowledge.

I confirm that I wish to apply for a water meter to be installed at my property in accordance with the terms and conditions of South East Water's Domestic Customers Metering Policy.

I understand that this application form, as completed by me/us, is a measured charge notice to South East Water to fix water services charges for the premises in Section 1 of this form, by reference to the volume of water supplied.

Name: *(block capitals)*

Signature:

Date:

Name: *(block capitals)*

Signature:

Date:

If you have completed this form on behalf of the account holder, please state in what capacity, e.g. spouse, legal representative, carer, etc.

PLEASE NOTE: YOU MUST SIGN THIS DECLARATION FOR YOUR APPLICATION TO BE PROCESSED

**When completed, please fold, glue, detach this pre-paid form and return to South East Water.**

	SELF WATER AUDIT	Average Usage in litres	Tick the boxes for each activity that relates to you/your family
<b>BATHROOM</b>			
Bath	Power shower	90	
	Bath – Average	80	
	Shower – double for longer than 5 minutes	45	
Toilet	Normal	9	
	Dual Flush	6	
Brushing teeth	with tap running	15	
	using a cup	1	
Washing hands/face	while tap running	15	
	Plugged Basin	6	
Shaving	under running tap	30	
	using a plugged basin	6	
	using a cup	1	
<b>KITCHEN</b>			
Dishwasher	Normal	35	
	Economy	15	
Washing dishes by hand	under running tap	45	
	in a plugged sink	16	
	using a bowl	8	
General food preparation and drinking	under running tap	27	
	in a plugged sink	16	
	using a bowl with the tap off	8	
Washing Machine	Normal	50	
	Economy	35	
<b>OUTDOOR USE</b>			
Car washing	Pressure washer (litres per hour)	400	
	Hosepipe with trigger gun (litres per hour)	300	
	Drive in (litres per use)	75	
	Bucket and sponge (litres per use)	35	
General watering	Sprinkler (litres per hour)	2000	
	Hosepipe without trigger gun/nozzle (litres per hour)	1000	
	Hosepipe with trigger gun (litres per hour)	600	
	Watering can (litres per use)	15	
<b>Count up the number of green, orange and pink boxes you have ticked</b>		Pink	
		Orange	
		Green	

**If you have mostly ticked the green and orange boxes, it is more likely you will save money by being metered. If you have ticked mostly pink boxes, why not switch to the activities in the green**



## How to Contact Us

Our Customer Service Centre is open:

Monday to Friday from 8am to 7pm

Saturday from 8am to 1pm

We are closed on Sundays and Bank Holidays

## Email

[www.southeastwater.co.uk/contact](http://www.southeastwater.co.uk/contact)

## Web

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

## Call

### Account Enquiries

0333 000 0001

### Water Supply and General Enquiries

0333 000 0002

### Payment Helpline

0333 000 0005

### Out of Hours Emergencies

0333 00 00 365

### 24hr Automated Payment Line

0333 00 00 247

### Leak line

0333 000 3330

## Write

### Customer Services

South East Water

Snodland

Kent

ME6 5AH

south east water

South East Water Limited, Registered in England No. 2679874  
Registered Office: Snodland, Kent, ME6 5AH