Leaks from customers’ supply pipes
South East Water

This leaflet forms part of our Customer Code of Practice, which outlines the services we provide for household customers. It has been produced in compliance with our licence.

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Introduction

This leaflet explains:

➤ Who is responsible for the repair of leaks on the pipes and fittings that are part of your property
➤ How you can check for leaks
➤ How we can help you repair a leak
➤ How we can adjust your water charges if you have a leak.
How to report a leak

If you spot a leak, please tell us about it; you might be the first person to let us know. You can report possible leaks by calling our 24-hour Leakline on 0333 000 3330 or by using our online form at southeastwater.co.uk/reportaleak

How do leaks happen?

South East Water’s 14,500 km network of water mains is more than 90 years old in places, making it vulnerable to leakage. Tackling the amount of water lost through leaks is a priority for us and we know it is important to our customers. Each year we invest more than £13 million on reducing leakage and our specialist leak detection teams save an estimated 80 million litres of water every day, and we continue to meet the demanding annual targets set by the water industry regulator, Ofwat.

Leaking water doesn’t always result in a stream of water on the road and can be difficult to locate.Leaks also often occur on the private pipes which supply customers’ homes and businesses. Below are some of the indicators that there may be a leak:

- Damp patches, pools of water or lush vegetation in dry periods either in the road or pavement or on your property
- If your water pressure drops unexpectedly
- If you hear continuous noise from your plumbing system when no one is using water, this could be the noise of water escaping under pressure.

Leaks occur for many reasons, including:

- Ground movement causing pipe fractures
- Pipe corrosion in poor ground conditions
- Damage to pipes
- Faulty pipes and fittings.

Our water supply network is made up of many lengths of pipe joined together. Ground movement often occurs when there is a hard frost or a long dry spell, causing pipes to crack or pull apart at the joints. This is a common cause of the leaks we see on our pipes and those belonging to customers.

Another common cause can be faulty fittings, such as the ball valves in water tanks and cisterns. While this type of leakage is usually visible through water running from overflow pipes, the water can often run to waste through toilets and drains.
Wrap up for winter

Frozen water pipes can become blocked and sometimes burst as they thaw. Taking a few simple steps to insulate water tanks and pipes can prevent water pouring through ceilings, damaging buildings and furniture.

You can find out more information, including how to lag pipework, at southeastwater.co.uk/winter or by asking for our Wrap up for winter leaflet.

Responsibility for maintenance and repair of water pipes

The water mains and pipes in public roads and footpaths (called the ‘public highway’) are our responsibility. Pipes not in the public highway are normally your responsibility (please see diagram opposite) but not all supply pipes are set out in this way. For example, you may share your supply pipe with a neighbour.

There is usually an underground stop tap at the boundary of your property in the footpath and there may also be a meter installed here. Both the stop tap and meter are our responsibility. The pipe that carries water from the stop tap into your house is called the supply pipe and this is normally your responsibility.

In the event of a leak on this pipe or within your property, you may find that you are covered by your household insurance policy. We recommend that you contact your own plumber to carry out the necessary repairs. A directory of approved, qualified plumbers can be found on the WaterSafe website watersafe.org.uk or by calling 0333 207 9030.

If we identify a leak at your property as part of our normal leak detection work, we will write to let you know. This is formally known as a Waste of Water Notice and will give you details of when the leak must be repaired. Where leaks are not repaired, we have statutory powers to undertake the required work and recharge our costs. In an emergency, or where a leak may be causing damage, we may need to turn off the supply until the leak has been repaired.
**Electrical earthing**

Some properties, if built before 1966 and not subsequently rewired, may find the water supply pipe is still used as a primary method of earthing. This has not been viewed as a safe method for over 40 years and in such cases it is recommended that you contact your electricity provider or competent electrician to have the electrical installation checked for safety.

Any electrical earthing issues that the property may have will be pre-existing and are not caused by the water meter installation. Therefore South East Water cannot be liable for any electrical earthing issues that may arise.

**Typical house and water connection**
Locating leaks on underground pipes

If you are on a metered supply, you can follow the steps below to check if there may be a leak on your supply pipe.

› Turn off any appliances which may be using water, such as washing machines and dishwashers
› Turn off your internal stop tap, which is normally under the kitchen sink
› Open the meter box and remove the foam or plastic disc and look at the numbers on the meter dial. Take a reading to see whether they continue to move
› Try to leave the water turned off for an hour and then take another reading. If there has been an increase in the reading, you may have a leak on your supply pipe.

If you feel there may be a leak on your supply pipe, please contact us as soon as possible and we will investigate. Contact numbers are provided on the back page of this leaflet.

Assistance with repairs to leaking supply pipes

Leak detection service

If you think you have a leak on your supply pipe, we will help you look for it. We offer a leak detection service to domestic customers, which is free for the first hour during normal working hours. We may charge for services exceeding one hour but only with the prior agreement of the customer.

Assisted supply pipe repair scheme

We will contribute £100 towards the cost of repairing the supply pipe, subject to the following:

› The leak is on the external supply pipe, and we have confirmed this
› The pipe has not been subject to accidental damage, tampering or vandalism
› The property supplied is occupied by the owner
› You have not already had an assisted leak repair at the property
› You have had the work completed within 30 days.

Our contribution is normally applied as a credit on your next bill.
Subsidised supply pipe replacement scheme

If your supply pipe is in a poor condition, we may recommend that it is replaced rather than repaired. If so, we will contribute £250 towards the cost of replacing the pipe. This is subject to the same conditions as our assisted supply pipe repair scheme listed on page 6.

Our contribution is normally applied as a credit on your next water bill.

If you replace a supply pipe made from lead, we will also replace any lead on our part of the pipework.

Restrictions to assisted repair and subsidised replacement schemes

The assisted repair and subsidised replacement schemes are restricted to domestic properties that are occupied by the property owner.

If you rent your home from the property owner, the owner will be responsible for the repair and maintenance of the supply pipe, and will not be eligible for either scheme.

Supply pipes shared with non-domestic premises

If your supply pipe is shared with a non-domestic property, you will not be eligible for an assisted leak repair.

However, you will be eligible for a subsidised pipe replacement, if you install a new, separate supply pipe to your property.

Supply pipes shared with other domestic properties

You will be eligible for an assisted leak repair if your supply pipe is shared with another domestic property, e.g. a neighbouring house.

You will also be eligible for a subsidised pipe replacement, if you install a new, separate supply pipe to your property.
Leak allowances for high water consumption

If you are on a metered supply, the meter will record all of the water we supply to your property, which will include any leak on your supply pipe or from appliances in your home.

However, if the cause of the leak is fully repaired, you will qualify for a one-off leak allowance, where we will adjust your charges back to their normal levels. Where we have no record of previous usage, e.g. you have recently moved into the property, we will estimate your normal usage. If subsequent meter readings show your actual usage to be lower than our estimate, we will make a further adjustment to reflect this.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of leak</th>
<th>Allowance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supply pipe leak</td>
<td>All usage attributable to the leak, up to and including the date of repair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non supply pipe leak</td>
<td>Any usage on your last bill that was attributable to the leak up to a maximum period of six months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you are worried that you may have a leak on your supply pipe, please contact us and we will arrange for a Technician to visit and check your supply.
If our visit confirms that there is a leak, we will advise you to contact your plumber for this to be repaired. Details of the assistance we can give to the cost of the repair or replacement are outlined on page 6.

If the repair is completed within 30 days of the date of our Technician’s visit, we will make an allowance for the leak as a credit to your water bill. If the repair takes longer than 30 days, the value of the allowance may be reduced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time to repair</th>
<th>Allowance reduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30-60 days</td>
<td>Allowance reduced by 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-90 days</td>
<td>Allowance reduced by 66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 90 days</td>
<td>No allowance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A leak allowance application form is enclosed with this leaflet. You should apply for the leak allowance once the leak has been satisfactorily repaired and within one month of the repair being carried out. A copy of the invoice for the repair work will be required. If you are unable to provide this, we may need to visit your property to inspect the repair. Leak allowances are not made where the leak is due to customer negligence. **Customers may receive one leak allowance per property.**
**Rented properties**

If you live in a rented property, you may need to contact your landlord to arrange for the leak to be repaired. Please contact us if you believe that this may cause the repair to be delayed.
Conditions applying to leak allowances

Customers will receive one leak allowance per property.

We will calculate the adjustment on the basis of past normal consumption.

Where there is no past consumption, e.g. you have recently moved to a new home, or had a water meter fitted, we will base the allowance on typical usage levels for the number of people living at the property.

A leak allowance will not be made where the leak has been caused through negligence.

Leak allowances are restricted to domestic properties and community buildings. A community building means:

› Place of worship
› Village hall
› Community centre
› Scout or guide hut
› Other premises which, in our view, are similar to these categories.

Leak allowances for mixed-use supplies – those with both domestic and business water usage – will be applied to the domestic element of the supply only, and determined on typical usage levels for the number of people living at the property.

Supplies to business premises are not eligible for leak allowances.

Wastewater services

South East Water is your drinking water supplier, but our meter readings are also used to calculate your wastewater charges.

We bill customers for wastewater services on behalf of Thames Water, so we will automatically apply any leak allowance to these charges too.

If you receive wastewater services from Southern Water, we will automatically notify them that we have made an adjustment, and it will make a similar allowance and issue you with a revised bill.
Water meter installation

Most meters are fitted externally, usually at the highway boundary outside your property. If a leak is found during or after our installation work, the following repairs and allowances may be applied.

**Meter installation – free leak repair during installation**

If a leak is found to be on the pipework that is excavated to install the meter, we will repair this at the time we fit the meter. This will be free of charge, even if the leak is on the customer’s part of the pipe.

**Meter installation – free leak repair after installation**

If you experience a leak on your supply pipe following work by the Company to install a water meter, you may be eligible for the following additional support.

We will repair the leak, free of charge, providing that:

- The leak occurred in the period between the date the meter is installed and your first full six-monthly meter bill
- The leak is on the external supply pipe, and we have confirmed this
- The pipe has not been subject to accidental damage, tampering or vandalism.

Where it is unlikely that our meter installation has caused the leak, for example, the leak is some distance from our work or is located under the property, we will make a contribution to the repair costs. This will be agreed on a case-by-case basis.

Following our repair, we will backfill the excavation and use existing surface materials to complete the reinstatement. Tarmac and concrete surfaces will be replaced. If our standard free repair and reinstatement is unacceptable, for example you have a new driveway which you don’t want to be disturbed, an alternative approach may be agreed, but you will be required to pay any additional costs arising from the alternative approach.
Meter installation – leak allowance

If a leak has been recorded on a meter following installation, this will be cancelled from your bill by applying a leak allowance.

Leak allowances are normally limited to one per customer, but those arising from meter installation repairs are not included within this limit.

Independent advice

Your interests are further represented by an independent body the Consumer Council for Water, who can provide you with free information and advice. Its contact details are as follows:

Consumer Council for Water
1st Floor, Victoria Square House, Victoria Square, Birmingham B2 4AJ
Email: enquiries@ccw.org.uk
Website: ccwater.org.uk
Tel: 0207 931 8502
For more information about South East Water

Please refer to our website southeastwater.co.uk or the other Customer Code of Practice leaflets:

Water metering: A guide for household customers
Household water charges, payment options and debt recovery
Service Plus: Our services for customers with additional needs
Guaranteed Standards of Service
South East Water: Your water company

If things go wrong.

The information we provide is intended to be accessible to all our customers. If you would prefer this leaflet in an alternative format, such as large print, braille or audio, please contact us. Additionally if your first language is not English we may be able to help you with our interpretation service when you call. Contact details are on the back of this leaflet.

Customer Care

South East Water offers a wide range of tariffs, payment schemes and support to customers with additional needs or difficulty paying their bill.

For more information contact our specialist team on 0333 000 2468 or visit southeastwater.co.uk/customercare
South East Water leak allowance application form

Fields marked with an asterisk (*) must be completed.

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM IN INK, USING BLOCK CAPITALS

SECTION 1 - Account Holder(s)

Account Number
(at top left hand of your bill) □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ - □

Title: *  Surname: *  Forename: *

Title: *  Surname: *  Forename: *

Address for correspondence: *

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Postcode: 

Tel No: * Daytime:

Mobile:  Email:

SECTION 2 - Property details of where leak occurred

House Name / Number *

Street: *

Town: *

Postcode: *

Do you own or rent the property? *  □ Own  □ Rent
Is your water supply shared with a neighbour? * □ Yes □ No

If yes, please provide address(es) sharing the supply pipe.

Address 1.

Address 2.

Address 3.

Is the water supply for domestic use only? * □ Yes □ No

SECTION 3 - About the leak

Where was the leak? * □ Supply pipe leak □ Non supply pipe leak

Date leak identified: * Date leak repaired: *

Please enclose a copy of the invoice for the repair work. If you do not have an invoice, please describe the repair work undertaken. A South East Water technician may visit to inspect the work that has been carried out.

Meter reading taken following repair:

If possible, please read your meter on the day the leak is repaired, or shortly afterwards. Please read the black digits only and ignore any red digits.

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

📞 Call

Account enquiries
0333 000 0001

Water supply and general enquiries
0333 000 0002

Minicom/text phone
0333 000 0004

Payment helpline
0333 000 0005

24 hour water supply emergencies line
0333 00 00 365

24 hour automated payment line
0333 00 00 247

24 hour Leakline
0333 000 3330

وضوع Online

southeastwater.co.uk/contact

✉️ Write

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