

Having a water meter fitted



Will it benefit me?

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Introduction

Like many people, you may be wondering if metered water might be a better choice for your home. But if you don't have all the facts, it's hard to make that decision. In this booklet, you should find the information you need to help you decide.

The information is based on the questions our customers ask most frequently, but if you want to know more, please contact our Metering Section on 01737 773477.

If you decide to apply to have a water meter installed, you will find an application form on page 13.



Having a water meter

What is a water meter?

A water meter is a simple device fitted to your service pipe. It records the amount of water passing from the mains into your home. Like a gas or electricity meter, it shows how much you use.

Why is it beneficial?

- You control the size of your own water bill
- You only pay for the water you use
- You no longer subsidise those who are less careful with water
- You help to prevent wastage
- You help to reduce leakage
- You help to protect the environment by conserving water.

Do I have to pay to have a meter installed?

As a domestic customer, you can have a meter installed completely free of charge, subject to a satisfactory survey.

Where are meters fitted?

Meters are normally fitted at our preferred location, that is in the footway close to the water main, or just inside the boundary of your property.

Where we cannot meter the supply at this position, we will consider an alternative location. In deciding the location, customers' views can be taken into consideration, especially where customers have special needs.

We can consider installing single meters in properties of

multiple occupation, such as blocks of flats, as long as one person or body, such as a residents' association or managing agent, is willing to accept responsibility for the bill. We can also install a second meter for individual units, provided that it does not entail disproportionate costs.

Where, in the company's opinion, it is not practicable, or it is too expensive, to install a meter, or we cannot get agreement to install a single meter for a shared supply, a fixed charge equivalent to the average household charge will be applied. Examples could include:

- Where the water supply is shared by more than one property and it would require the supplies to be separated
- Where there is more than one supply to the premises
- Where internal plumbing alterations are required.

The average household charge will not apply where there is any discretionary use of water, for example garden watering or a swimming pool. The industry regulator OFWAT determines any dispute over the refusal to install a meter free of charge.

Any meter fitted under the scheme remains the property of the company.

What happens if I decide to ask for a meter?

Firstly, we check if a meter can actually be installed. In some cases, particularly in some flats where all the water does not enter through a single pipe, it is not possible to install a meter without plumbing alterations. These have to be done at the customer's expense.

Free meters are installed on a rolling geographic basis, and should be installed within six months of an application. Preference is given to elderly and disabled customers.

In the meantime, you continue to pay in the normal way. When your meter is installed, we close your unmeasured account, refund any monies due and open a new, metered account for you.

Where the meter is not installed within six months, metered charges are calculated and applied retrospectively once the meter has been installed and consumption levels can be established.

But if you do not want to wait, you can have a meter installed at your own expense within 15 days of confirming your acceptance in writing of the charges, terms and conditions. The cost varies for each site but is typically about £150.

What if I am a tenant?

If you are a tenant you should inform your landlord in writing before a meter is installed. If you are on a fixed term tenancy for a term of less than six months, you will need their permission for the meter installation.

Electrical earthing

For a meter to be installed in a property built prior to 1966, old metal pipework and fittings may need to be replaced. If your property uses the metal water service pipe as a means of electrical earthing, the meter installation may render it unsuitable for this purpose. Using the service pipe as an electrical earth is no longer regarded as a safe method of installation, and has been prohibited by the Institution of Electrical Engineers Wiring Regulations since 1966. It is possible that buildings built before that date may still be earthed in this way.

As the earthing to your property is unknown to us, we strongly advise that you contact your local Electrical Supply Company or an approved electrician. They may recommend that you have your earthing checked and they are entitled to charge you for this service. Such charges will

not be reimbursed by Sutton and East Surrey Water. The earthing of a property is an essential safety requirement and is the sole responsibility of the owner of the property. We cannot accept liability for damage or injury resulting from the use of a water pipe as an electrical earth.

If you are not responsible for the electrical earthing of the property, please ensure that the owner or other appropriate person is informed.

Will I save money?

People often find that their water bill is lower after having a meter installed. It depends on many factors but mainly:

- The current unmeasured charge
- How many people live in the property

Average domestic use for a single occupancy property is about 65 cubic metres per year. Properties with more than one occupier tend to use an additional 50 cubic metres per person per year. Some properties will use significantly more or less than the average, depending on the number of water using appliances, the amount of garden watering and the size of the garden.

You should be aware that meters record water lost by leaking pipes, as well as the water consumed for domestic use.



The table below shows typical annual water volumes in cubic metres for High, Average and Low water users.

Number of Occupants	1	2	3	4	5	6
High User	75	133	191	249	307	365
Average User	65	115	165	215	265	315
Low User	50	89	127	166	204	243

You can use the charges booklet provided to calculate how much you could pay. Calculate the volume charge by multiplying the expected annual consumption from the table above by the relevant volume charge and then add the annual standing charge. This will be an estimate of your annual charges for water supply. Your wastewater bill will also be based on the meter readings and can be calculated in the same way using the wastewater charges. If you would like assistance in calculating your potential charges then please call our Metering Section on 01737 773477.

How often will I get a bill?

If you have a metered supply, we read the meter every six months, and you will receive a bill twice a year. You will be billed for each complete cubic metre used. (Details of how to pay are on page 15.)

About your bill

Bills are very similar to those for gas, electricity or telephone services. There is a standing charge, plus a consumption charge, calculated on the number of cubic metres of water you have used. The standing charge is payable in advance. We offer a number of payment options, including a budget plan scheme where regular monthly payments are agreed that should cover the year's charges. To find out more, contact our Customer Accounts Department on 01737 764444.

Does the company check for leaks when a meter is installed?

When a meter is first fitted, we check for leaks and advise you of any repairs necessary on your section of the supply pipe. If there are leaks on the outlet joints of the meter, we will repair them free of charge. For details of our leak detection and repair scheme, contact our Customer Service Department on 01737 772000. You may qualify for a free service.

How can I spot a leak?

The best way to detect leaks is to check your meter regularly. This way you will be likely to notice any unusual rise in consumption, which could mean there is a leak.

Alternatively, turn off your internal stopcock and check if the meter is still recording any consumption. If so, there is possibly a leak between the meter and your property. In this case, contact our Customer Service Department for further advice.

Who is responsible for repairing leaks?

Pipes and fittings on your side of the company's principal stopcock are your responsibility, as is the internal plumbing. You are responsible for the repair of leaks and the wastage of water from your pipework.

We offer a leak detection and repair service for domestic customers. Contact our Customer Service Department on 01737 772000 for further information. The pipe from the water main to the boundary of the road in which the main is usually laid is the company's responsibility.

In some cases, customers may be jointly responsible for shared parts of the water service pipe. It is also worth noting that pipes which are your responsibility may be laid under land that you do not actually own.

Can I read the meter myself?

Most meters are fitted in an underground PVC box which includes the stopcock. You can read the meter at any time by lifting the lid. A read-out of the amount used is shown under the transparent panel on top of the meter. The black figures are the important ones - they are used to calculate your bill. The red figures are not used for billing purposes.

In the following example, the reading is 43.2189 cubic metres, and, for billing purposes, we would record 43 cubic metres.

00043 **2189**

In the next example, the reading is 43.21 cubic metres. Again, we would record 43 metres.

00043 **21**

What happens if I think the meter is inaccurate?

Water meters are very accurate, but if you have serious doubts about the accuracy of your meter, contact our Customer Service Department on 01737 772000 and ask for it to be tested.

If it is found to be faulty, your bill will be amended. But if it is operating within allowable tolerance, we will charge you for carrying out the test.

Can I change back to an unmetered supply?

Customers who opt to have a meter under the free meter option scheme have the right to revert to the unmeasured system of charging within 12 months of the meter being installed. In order for customers to have sufficient information on which to base a decision, we allow you to revert up to one month after receiving the bill that provides consumption data covering a minimum of 12 months.

For most customers, this will be the third bill with consumption information that you will have received

since having the new meter installed. It will also inform you of your right to revert. The terms are included in a leaflet enclosed with the initial meter bill.

Who maintains the meter?

We maintain meters and replace them as necessary. If you notice any damage, or if the meter does not appear to be working, tell us as soon as possible.

Your peace of mind

All Sutton and East Surrey Water staff, and contractors working on our behalf, carry identification. We urge you to challenge our representatives to prove their identity if you have any doubts. If you are concerned about the validity of somebody working on your water supply, please call us on 01737 772000, and we will advise you accordingly.

How much water do I use?

The chart below shows the water usage for typical household activities. Most people know that sprinklers use a vast amount of water. The chart shows just how wasteful a garden sprinkler can be. One hour of sprinkling uses enough water to fill 11 baths or wash 44 cars.

TYPE OF USE	LITRES	GALLONS
Basic usage per person per day (cooking, drinking, personal hygiene - excluding bathing)	40	9
Bath - per person	90	20
Toilet flushing - per flush	9	2
Shower - per person	30	7
Automatic washing machine - per wash	100	22
Dishwasher - per wash	60	13
Use of hosepipe per hour	1000	220

Sewerage charges

If your property is connected to mains drainage, your meter reading is also used to calculate sewerage charges. When setting the sewerage charge, the company concerned takes into account that not all the water supplied will be returned to the public sewer.

If you believe that, in your case, considerably more than the average amount of water is not returned to the public sewer, a further allowance may be made. Contact our Customer Accounts Department on 01737 764444 if you want to know more.

Remove form along perforation



METER INSTALLATION APPLICATION FORM

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO:

Sutton and East Surrey Water
London Road, Redhill, Surrey RH1 1LJ

METER INSTALLATION APPLICATION FORM

I wish to apply for:

A FREE meter installation

A meter installation for which
I will pay the charge

(Please tick the type of installation that you want)

NAME (block capitals) _____

SUPPLY ADDRESS _____

CONTACT ADDRESS (if different) _____

CUSTOMER REFERENCE NUMBER (shown on bill) _____

Telephone (Home): _____

Telephone (Work): _____

Signed _____ Date _____

Remove form along perforation

How to pay

You can pay in different ways:

- **Freephone Payment Options line 0800 587 2936**
Available 24 hrs a day, seven days a week
Make credit and debit card payments, check the balance of your account, or to set up or amend a Direct Debit, or set up a cash card instalment arrangement.
This is an automated speech recognition service and does not transfer to a live operator.
- At a bank. Complete the Giro slip at the bottom of the bill and take it with your payment to any branch of your bank. If you do not have a bank account, cash payment may be made free of charge at any branch of Lloyds TSB Bank plc in our area of supply. Other banks will make a charge if you do not have an account with them.
- At Alliance & Leicester by Giro account. If you have an account with Alliance & Leicester you can complete the Giro slip at the bottom of the bill and send it to: Girobank, Bootle, Merseyside GIR 0AA.
- At a post office. Take the whole account with your payment. The Post Office will make a charge for this service.
- By post. Please make cheques payable to Sutton and East Surrey Water plc and send to London Road, Redhill, Surrey RH1 1LJ.
- On the Internet. Visit our website www.waterplc.com for information on how to do this.



Other information in our series of booklets:

- Why saving water makes good business sense
- It's precious... don't waste it
- Keeping your water flowing
- How we help you detect and repair leaks

Any questions?

If you would like further information, please contact:

Customer Services
Sutton and East Surrey Water
London Road
Redhill RH1 1LJ

Telephone: 01737 772000

Office hours:

Monday-Thursday 8.30am-5.00pm

Friday 8.30am-4.30pm

Supply emergencies 24hrs

www.waterplc.com

