Finding and fixing leaks
Our Code of Practice for leakage from domestic water supplies
Finding and fixing your leaks

Sutton and East Surrey Water has one of the lowest levels of water leakage in the country, a record we’re proud of and aim to maintain with your help.

This leaflet explains how you can detect a leak on your property and what you should do about it. Less leakage means lower charges for our customers, because we treat less water. The environment also benefits, because we take less water from over and underground sources. Also, if you have a meter, fixing a leak will save you money.

We want to work with our customers to reduce leakage. This leaflet gives advice about responsibility and provides help with fixing any problems.

If you have any concerns, or need further information, please call our Customer Services team on 01737 772000

Help us preserve this precious resource

We continually monitor flows within our supply network to help us find leaks. As soon as we discover a problem it is investigated and repaired as quickly as possible.

Finding leaks

However, not all underground pipework is our responsibility. Depending on where a leak occurs, it could be your responsibility. This leaflet provides information on leaks which are the responsibility of the property owner (see page four).

Finding and fixing leaks quickly is particularly important if you have a water meter (see page five).

Detecting a leak

Leaks are not always obvious. If you have a meter you may only become aware of a leak when you receive a bill that is higher than normal.

But there could be obvious signs like a damp area in the house or garden, or perhaps an overflow or tap is constantly dripping.

If you discover a leak there are two options:

• Call a qualified plumber to fix it – WaterSafe approved local plumbers can be found at www.watersafe.org.uk.
• Find out if you qualify for our free Leak Detection and Repair Scheme (see pages 6 and 7 for details).

Preparing for winter

We probably all know someone whose life and home has been devastated by a burst water pipe in the winter – make sure it’s not you by following this advice.

• Fix dripping taps or overflows
• Check your internal stopcock is working by turning it off and on (it’s usually located under or near the kitchen sink)
• Ensure that pipes in the attic, garage or outbuildings are well lagged
• Use waterproof insulation on all pipes exposed to the elements – wet lagging is useless
• Insulate all outside taps
• Ensure your central heating is serviced regularly
• Keep your plumber’s number handy in case of an emergency
• Insulate storage tanks in the attic or roof space, but don’t insulate the tank from underneath – warm air from below will help prevent water from freezing
• Watch our ‘How to’ videos online – helpful advice includes a pipe lagging demonstration and how to locate your stopcock.
In most cases we are responsible for the section between the water main and the street boundary – the communication pipe. You, or your landlord, are responsible for the section from the street boundary to your property - the supply pipe. A stopcock, and a meter if you have one, is usually located near this boundary. This is shown in the diagram to the left.

If you share a service pipe with your neighbours, or other special circumstances exist, ask our Customer Services team for advice.

Plumbing leaks
If the leak is within your property and on pipework above the ground, you will need to call a plumber. Although this is your responsibility, we may be able to help you find a plumber. Call our Customer Services team if you would like help.

Regulations
The Water Industry Act 1991 allows us to serve a ‘waste notice’ if we see a leak on private land. It must then be repaired within 21 days of the notice being issued. If this is not done we have the power to complete the work and charge the person responsible.

If a leak represents a danger to people or property, the supply may be cut off until it has been fixed.

using a meter to check for leaks
If you have a water meter, you can easily check for a leak yourself.

Turn off your stopcock (usually located under your kitchen sink), or make sure all your taps are turned off and no cisterns are filling, then check the meter. If the dial is still rotating it is highly likely you have a leak. If you need help carrying out this test, please call our Customer Services team.

Meter accuracy
If you think your water meter is not accurate, we will be happy to test it for you.

We normally offer one free meter check per property, and we’ll check for any leaks at the same time. If you would like a test, contact our Customer Service team to make an appointment.

For a fee, we can arrange for an independent company to take your meter away and carry out a full test. You will receive a copy of the test results.

Adjustments to your bill
In the unlikely event that the meter is inaccurate, we will refund any money you paid for testing it and make an adjustment on your next bill. We will base the adjustment on the amount of water you have used in the past.

We will also adjust bills in some other cases if a leak has been detected on a metered supply, but only if it is repaired within a specified time (usually 28 days). However, we cannot reimburse you if:

• The leak was caused by your own negligence
• You know about the leak but failed to report it
• You should have known about the leak but failed to report it

Any adjustment will be based on the amount of water you have used in the past, or on typical water use in a similar property. The allowance will be shown on your next bill.

Adjustment for leakage is only made once for each property when owned by the same person. You will not need to apply for an allowance as your bill will be automatically adjusted as soon as we know your leak has been repaired.

Please note: If your waste water service charges are based on your metered water supply, a similar adjustment will be made to your bill. If you are billed by us for waste water services, then we will make the adjustment. Otherwise, we will inform the other company for you.

Your pipe or ours?

Each property is connected to one of our water mains by a service pipe. The ownership of this pipe is divided between us and the property owner.

Where to find your meter
Most properties have an underground stopcock near the property boundary - the water meter is normally fitted there.

Prevention is better than cure
When a meter is installed, we check there are no significant existing leaks in the pipework. We know from experience that a great deal of water is lost from undetected leaks in domestic pipework.

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www.waterplc.com

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Under this scheme, we will find and repair any leaks on your part of the underground supply pipe. All work is guaranteed for 12 months and is free of charge, subject to the following conditions:

**Terms and conditions**

1. **The property must be used in full or in part as a dwelling.** You are not eligible for this offer if your property is owned by a local authority, housing association, or commercial organisation.

2. **Our offer is free up to a limit of four man hours.** If, on detailed investigation, it becomes clear that this is likely to be exceeded, we will let you know as soon as possible. You will have the opportunity to either:
   - a. Make alternative arrangements with a contractor of your choice (in which case you will pay the whole cost of the work), or
   - b. Instruct us to carry out the work on the understanding that we reserve the right to charge for, and you undertake to pay for, the whole of any cost incurred after four man hours.*

3. **If any of the pipework that needs repairing is on someone else’s land, we will still try to carry out the repair. But if we find that this causes problems with the landowner, we may decide not to complete the repair.**

4. **We will have to excavate to repair the pipe.** When we have finished, we will refill the excavation with the material removed. If it is necessary to take up slabs, bricks, or paving stones, we will attempt to replace them as best we can. If the pipe is under tarmac or a concrete drive, we will replace the surface with a temporary tarmac surface only, and the site will be left safe and tidy. In all cases, final reinstatement will be your responsibility.

5. **In the event that a leak is detected under your garden, you will be responsible for removing plants and shrubs to prepare the area for excavation. You are also responsible for replacing plants and shrubs after repair work. We are not liable for subsequent loss or damage resulting from the removal and replanting.**

6. **We cannot accept liability for damage or injury resulting from the use of a water pipe as an electrical earth.** The Institution of Electrical Engineers’ Wiring Regulations has not allowed the earthing of electrical installations to water pipes since 1966, because they may not give a satisfactory earth. For advice on earthing, contact your electricity supply company or an approved electrical engineer. Earthing for a property is an essential safety requirement and is the sole responsibility of the owner of the property.

7. **We are not liable for any damage to property caused during the period the customer is waiting for a leak to be repaired.**

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9. **We will aim to give three days notice before starting work but please note that we cannot do the work unless there is someone at the property to turn water fittings on and off as necessary.**

10. **Unless we have been negligent, we will not be liable for any claims for injury to persons or damage to the property (including fittings), which arise through our work.**

11. **The pipe will remain your responsibility, but our work is guaranteed for 12 months.**

12. **This offer is available on one occasion per property, (irrespective of whether the ownership of the property changes), apart from properties supplied from a shared service pipe for which only one repair in total will be carried out. Any subsequent leaks will not be repaired free of charge. The scheme is for underground pipe work only up to the property building line.**

13. **We reserve the right to withdraw or amend this offer at any time without prior notice.**

14. **We reserve the right to refuse to make the offer at our sole discretion.** The repair will normally be undertaken within five working days, providing there are no exceptional circumstances.

* Latest charges are available on our website [www.waterplc.com](http://www.waterplc.com)
Contact information

All enquiries:
01737 772000 (including 24 hour emergency)
Freephone payment line: 0800 587 2936
www.waterplc.com

For email enquiries:
Billing enquiries: accountenquiries@waterplc.com
Water supply enquiries: watersupplyenquiries@waterplc.com
Metering enquiries: meterenquiries@waterplc.com
General enquiries: sesw@waterplc.com

Office hours: Mon – Fri 8.30am to 5.00pm

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

Other information leaflets:
• Every drop counts
• Having a water meter fitted
• Keeping your water flowing
• Saving water is good for business
• Drought resistant gardening
• Our helping hand scheme
• Look out for lead
• Code of practice on debt for domestic customers