



# When your water supply has a leak

Code of practice for domestic properties

By 2050, we'll need an extra 250 million litres of water every day to support our growing population. Leaks waste thousands of litres of this resource that we all work so hard to protect. That's why being proactive about spotting and fixing leaks is a vital part of our work.

By making every drop count, we can safeguard our supply and the environment around us for generations to come.

This guide is for any private individual or organisation who owns a domestic-use property. We'll explain:

- Who's responsible for the water pipes in and around your property
- Ways you can spot leaks for yourself
- Action to take if you think you've found a leak
- Ways we may be able to help you
- The leakage allowance we'll offer if you have a metered water supply

## Contents

1. Responsibility for water pipes
2. Finding leaks
3. Fixing leaks
4. Your leak allowance
5. Contact

# 1. Responsibility for water pipes

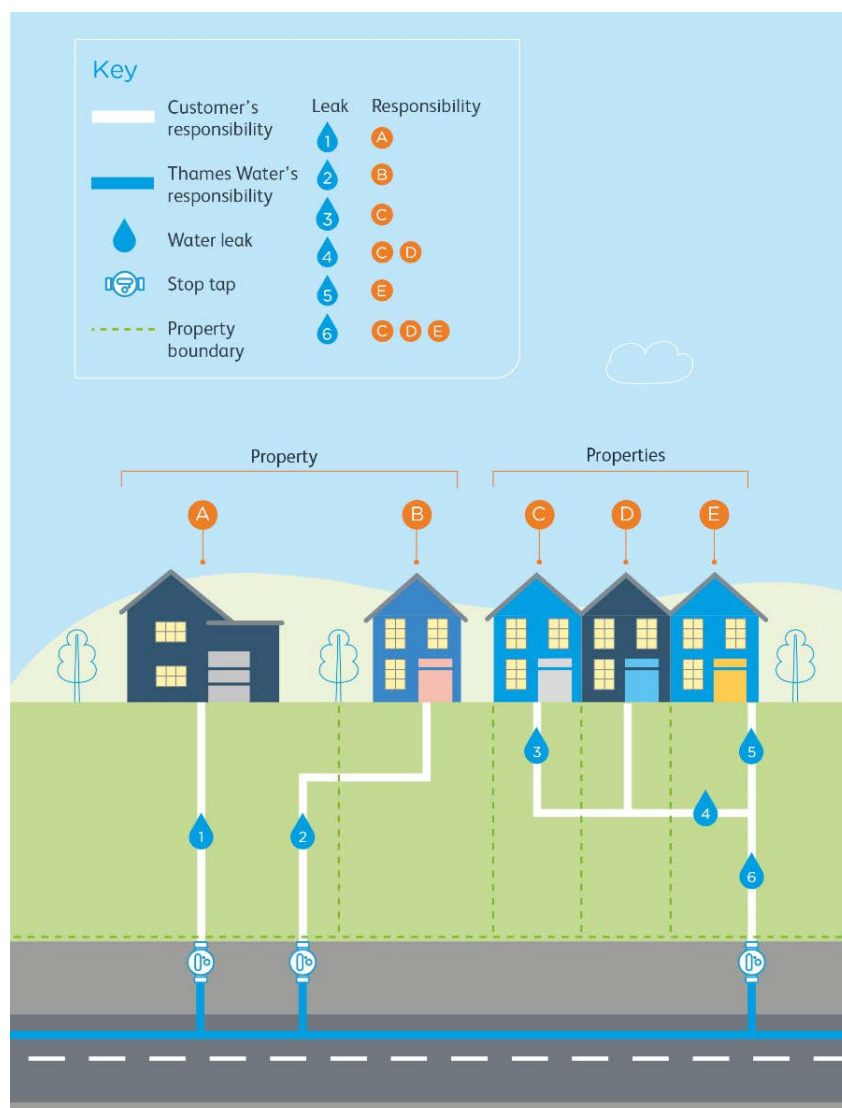
## Our water mains and pipes

We're responsible for the mains, which carry water around the region, and for the 'communication pipe' - the one linking your water supply pipe to our water main.

We look after our water mains and pipes with regular maintenance and repairs where they're needed. We're also working through a programme to reduce the number of leaks and bursts by replacing old mains in poor condition.

### Your water supply pipe and internal plumbing

The diagram below shows the usual water main and pipe set-up for a domestic property.



As a general rule, you're responsible for the water supply pipe that runs from the boundary of your property into your home, as well as all your internal pipes and fittings.

If your supply pipe crosses land belonging to someone else (scenario B in the diagram), you're responsible for the pipe up to the point that it connects to our communication pipe or water main in the public highway.

Sometimes a single supply pipe serves two or more properties – a 'shared supply' (scenario C/D/E in the diagram). This is more common when buildings are close together, in a side-by-side layout, such as on a terraced street. It means you and your neighbours have joint responsibility for maintaining the shared part of the pipe.

## 2. Finding leaks

### On our water mains and pipes

We're always working to improve our round-the-clock programme to detect bursts on our pipes and water mains. But it's a huge undertaking, so it can make all the difference when a customer lets us know they've spotted a leak.

We're grateful to everyone who reports leaks and bursts. If you find one – in the road, or on a pavement – you can let us know any time by visiting [thameswater.co.uk/leak](https://thameswater.co.uk/leak)

### On your water supply pipe and internal plumbing and fittings

We sometimes discover leaks on customers' pipes while we're performing local leak detection activities. Should this happen at your property, we'll let you know right away and help you through the repair process to minimise water wastage.

However, when it comes to leaks, the sooner they can be found, the better. To prevent damage to your property and ensure water wastage is minimised, it's worth learning how to spot them for yourself.

## Spotting a leak

Some tell-tale signs you have a leak are:

- Reduced water flow or pressure at your cold kitchen tap
- Waterlogged or damp areas in your garden, even during dry weather
- Noisy pipes
- An unusually high metered bill

### If you have a meter

If you're worried, taking regular readings from your meter can help you determine whether you have a leak. Significant or unexpected increases in your water use may indicate a leak.

With a smart meter and an online account, you can track your water use monthly or even daily. It's quick and easy to spot unexpected changes in your water use.

If you have a standard meter (not a smart meter) and want to test for a leak, follow these steps:

- Turn off your stop valve (usually under your kitchen sink) Make sure no cisterns are filling and no taps are on
- Read your water meter
- Leave the stop valve shut for half an hour then take another meter reading

The reading should be the same both times. If it's gone up, there may be a leak between the meter and the stop valve in your house.

If you think you have a leak on your supply pipe, you can call us on 0800 714 614, and we'll be able to investigate for you, free of charge.

It's important all leaks are repaired as quickly as possible. The next section explains what to do if you find one as well as ways we might be able to help you.

### 3. Fixing leaks

#### On our water mains and pipes

We repair leaks on the water mains and pipes that belong to us as soon as we can, as well as replacing pipes in poor condition as part of our ongoing investment programme. Although we make every effort to make repairs quickly, we normally need to get permission from the highway authority before we can dig up a footpath or road – which can add considerable time to our process.

#### On your water supply pipe

If we identify a leak on your supply pipe, or if you've found one yourself, it's your responsibility to get it fixed as quickly as you can.

Supply pipe leaks can cause serious damage to your property or a neighbour's. And if you have a water meter, the cost of all water lost will appear on your bill. So, it's vital you take action as soon as you discover a leak or we report one to you.

There are a few options available to help you get a leak fixed.

1. If you have a specific home emergency policy, it's likely your leak will be covered.
2. Check your home insurance – lots of policies include support for leaks on your supply pipe.
3. If you need a hand finding a plumber that comes well recommended, you can check our list of those we approve: [thameswater.co.uk/approvedplumbers](https://www.thameswater.co.uk/approvedplumbers)

You'll need to arrange to get your leak fixed within four weeks of us confirming it. Minimising water wastage is really important to protect our supply and the environment, so it's essential you act quickly once you've identified a leak.

If it hasn't been fixed within four weeks, we may send you a legal notice under Section 75 of the Water Industry Act 1991 explaining that we'll need to fix the leak in accordance with our

statutory duties. We may look to recover reasonable costs from you if we have to take these steps.

In an emergency, or where a leak may be causing damage, we may need to turn off your supply until the leak has been repaired.

## If you need help fixing your leak

Though the condition of your water supply pipe is your responsibility, we want to do all we can to avoid water wastage, and we understand not everyone will feel confident in making arrangements themselves or have insurance that covers leaks. So we're willing to step in to help you if we can.

Our offer applies to water supply pipes up to a length of 30m, with a diameter of up to 50mm, and includes work on shared external supply pipes for domestic properties. We can usually provide this service for free, although we'll always need the permission of the homeowner.

We'll repair your supply pipe up to where it enters your building, but we won't fix pipework underneath a building. For example, if you live in a flat, we'll fix the supply pipe to the point it enters the main building, but not all the way to your individual flat.

We'll make every effort to replace your supply pipe, but if this is impractical, for example it would be too expensive or the rest of the pipe is in good condition, we'll carry out a comprehensive repair instead.

Where possible, we'll use trenchless technology known as 'moling' to insert the new pipe. If we can't avoid digging on your footpath or driveway, we'll restore the surface to make sure it's safe for you to use. Unfortunately, we can't undertake specialist work, such as relaying block or crazy paving. In such cases, we'll make the area safe to use, but you might want to arrange for a specialist to relay your surface to its original condition.

If you decide to make your own arrangements, you'll be responsible for all costs.

## Guarantees

- i. The water supply pipe remains the customer's responsibility throughout, even if we repaired or replaced the pipe on any occasion.
- ii. Repairs/replacements of the supply pipe, and the associated connections, will be guaranteed for normal conditions of use for two years.
- iii. We can't guarantee the quality or the condition of the existing pipe either side of the repaired pipe and/or connections.

## On fittings inside your home

You're responsible for fixing any leaks and dealing with any wastage from the pipework, fixtures or fittings inside your property. It's a criminal offence to intentionally or negligently cause water to be wasted through a leaking pipe. If you intentionally or negligently waste water we've supplied, you can face a fine.

We want to help you prevent this, so if we discover water wastage from your internal plumbing, fixtures or fittings, we'll let you know right away and give you advice about getting the leak fixed.

## 4. Your leak allowance

If you have a water meter, it's important to remember that it records all water passing through it, including any lost through leaking pipes. And your bills will include the water wasted through the leak, as well as the water you've actually used.

We want to make sure you're not left out of pocket, which is why we'll cover the extra cost of your leak on your bill so long as:

- The leak's repaired within four weeks of it being confirmed
- You make your allowance claim within three months of the date of repair, even if you haven't yet received a water bill for the property
- The leak wasn't caused by negligence
- You didn't know about the leak - if we think you should have known about it but didn't fix it, you won't be entitled to a leak allowance
- We haven't had to issue you a Section 75 enforcement notice

If approved, we'll credit your account with any money that would have been added to your bill as a result of your leak - simple as that!

If you don't meet the above criteria but feel you have exceptional circumstances, please let us know, and we'll consider your leak allowance claim on its individual merits.

If you qualify, we can provide you a leak allowance for leaks on any internal pipework on one occasion. But for leaks on your water supply pipe, you can claim as many times as you need. To apply for an allowance, please go to [thameswater.co.uk/leakallowance](https://thameswater.co.uk/leakallowance)

### Calculating a leak allowance

If your property has its own water supply and meter, calculating your allowance is straightforward. We'll compare how much water you've used in the past, during a comparable period, against the amount recorded by your meter while you had the leak. We'll calculate the difference in cost and use this as the amount of the allowance we'll credit to your water and wastewater services account\*.

If we don't have a record of past use, we'll base the allowance amount on the typical water use for a similar household, considering your property size and number of occupants.

If you qualify for the allowance, we can backdate to when the leak started, to a maximum of 2 years.

If, after we've adjusted your bill, you don't feel the allowance accurately reflects the difference between the amount of water you'd have normally used and the amount recorded by your meter because of the leak, please let us know. We'll review the allowance and let you know our decision.

\*If we supply your water but another company provides your wastewater services, we'll let them know so they can apply an allowance to your wastewater account.

This leaflet can be supplied in large print,  
braille, or audio format upon request



[thameswater.co.uk/extracare](https://thameswater.co.uk/extracare)



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