



Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 Code of Practice

January 2025

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1. Introduction: Protecting Water Supplies

Thames Water Utilities Limited ('Thames Water' / 'We') have a legal obligation to enforce the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 ('the Regulations') and, in accordance with the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000, monitor the quality of water they supply to ensure water quality standards are maintained at consumers' taps.

The Regulations contain national requirements for the design, installation, composition and maintenance of water fixtures and fittings, their purpose being to prevent waste, misuse, undue consumption, contamination and erroneous measurement of water supplied by us.

2. Purpose of this document

Thames Water will ensure that the Regulations are enforced in an appropriate and proportionate manner in order to maintain the safety of public water supplies and to preserve water resources.

This Code of Practice provides guidance about our approach to enforcement.

3. Approach of Thames Water

Our approach is to work in partnership with customers/plumbers and developers to encourage compliance and to avoid enforcement action where possible. This includes proactive communication with non-domestic properties to advise responsible individuals of the regulatory requirements for the prior notification of certain plumbing activities, key measures to ensure compliance with the Regulations, and the benefits of using plumbers who are members of a water industry-recognised approval scheme.

We also subscribe and support the Water Industry Approved Plumber Scheme (WIAPS) which is aligned with the national WaterSafe Scheme. We encourage and direct our customers to employ the services of members via the link (section 11) detailed below. These schemes identify plumbers and groundworkers who have been assessed as being suitably qualified and insured to carry out works in compliance with the Regulations.

Thames Water also conducts a targeted programme of inspections based on potential risk. This programme includes non-household premises, public buildings, new connections, temporary events and 'Reduced Pressure Zone' valve installations (refer to glossary). Existing domestic properties are also inspected where we have reason to believe a risk exists.

Inspections may also be conducted following incidents where a deterioration in water quality is reported, for example following customer reports of issues or in response to failures of analytical parameters within samples collected by Thames Water.

We maintain an expert technical inspection team to provide support/advice and guidance to the activities listed above.

4. Responsibility of designers, installers, premises owners and occupiers

All customers who occupy premises that are connected to a Thames Water supply have a legal duty to ensure that their plumbing systems meet the standards set out in The Regulations. For this reason,

We recommend the use of water industry Approved Plumbers for all plumbing or groundworker activities, details of which can be obtained through WaterSafe.

The Water Industry Act 1991 provides Thames Water with legal powers to enter properties for the purpose of carrying out inspections of plumbing installations to assess compliance with the Regulations, as long as 24 hours' notice is provided. Property owners and occupiers are reminded that requests for access should be complied with.

Customers must also notify and seek the consent of Thames Water prior to undertaking certain types of plumbing works. Further details about when notification and consent should be sought are explained in Appendix B.

Thames Water are entitled to refuse consent within 10 working days of receipt of any required notification if we have concerns about compliance with the Regulations. Consent can be assumed if we do not refuse consent within 10 working days from the date we receive it, however all installations must comply with the Water Regulations.

Prior notification is not required for certain activities, if a water industry Approved Plumber undertakes the activity. For more information, please refer to Appendix B. This is because once an Approved Plumber completes the work, they will submit a certificate of compliance to both the customer and Thames Water detailing the plumbing work undertaken and confirming that it complies with the requirements of the Regulations.

5. Breaches of the Regulations

On occasion inspections will identify plumbing arrangements which are in breach of the Regulations, and it is important that these issues are resolved within timescales set out by Thames Water.

Thames Water aims to work with its customers, non-household customers and retailers to ensure that the Regulations are applied consistently and in a way that is proportionate to the risk caused by the breach.

In cases where work is in breach of the Regulations, we will assist those responsible to understand what is required of them and in turn what they can expect from Thames Water.

Thames Water will issue an enforcement notice which will explain what is causing a breach of the Regulations and what should be done about it and by when.

We will offer extra advice if requested. We will arrange to revisit the premises to make sure all problems have been put right. This may not be needed if an Approved Plumber has completed the work and issued a certificate of compliance.

Depending on the risk being caused by the breach and how quickly remedial action needs to be taken to remove the risk, various options are available to Thames Water, which may include:

- Urgent action by Thames Water to install appropriate backflow prevention on the service pipe at a point as near as is reasonably practicable to the boundary of the premises, in order to mitigate any risk while the responsible person completes the required rectification.
- Under some circumstances we may enter a property and resolve non-compliances after which we can recover reasonable costs from the owners of the domestic premises or non-household premises.
- Where we feel a danger to public health exists, we may disconnect the water supply to the premises and not restore it until the non-compliances have been rectified by the customer. The cost to reconnect the water supply will be paid by the customer.

Thames Water will assess each situation on a case-by-case basis and respond accordingly, applying their professional judgement.

6. Guiding principles for Enforcement

Thames Water has the power to prosecute those suspected of committing an offence under the Regulations. In such an event we will consider whether there is sufficient, admissible and reliable evidence, whether there is a realistic prospect of conviction and whether a prosecution is in the public interest. Under such circumstances we will comply with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Code for Crown Prosecutors and the relevant codes of practice of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

In undertaking enforcement activity Thames Water will adhere to the following guiding principles:

- Any decision regarding enforcement action will be impartial and objective, and will not be affected by race, politics, gender, sexual orientation or religious beliefs of any alleged offender, victim or witness.

- Thames Water believes that customers, when made aware of their legal obligations will wish to be compliant. We aim to assist and support customers to achieve compliance through several communication channels.
- Education is an intrinsic part of our enforcement, and the Water Regulations team will aim to provide, where appropriate and possible, any relevant materials and support to interested parties.
- There will be a consistent approach to enforcement whilst recognising individual circumstances.

Enforcement is seen as a final means of securing compliance without risk to Thames Water's assets, personnel, the general public and the environment.

Prosecution for a breach of the Regulations will be considered in all cases, but particularly where a serious, severe, persistent and/or blatant breach of the relevant legislation has taken place or where alternative methods of resolution have failed.

If an Approved Plumber has issued a certificate of compliance, but the work is subsequently found to breach the Regulations, the certificate can be offered as a defence against any prosecution.

7. Penalties

Failure to comply with the Regulations is a criminal offence. Any person or business convicted can be fined up to £1,000 per non-compliance.

8. Customer Complaints

As a responsible Regulatory body Thames Water will always respond to customer complaints or appeals.

Any dispute between Thames Water and a customer who considers that the Company has unreasonably withheld consent may be referred to an arbitrator that is agreed between both parties.

9. Training of Thames Water Personnel

Thames Water will ensure that all staff involved in Water Regulations activities are trained and assessed to a high standard. This includes regular briefings regarding changes to the law and feedback from the Water Industry.

It is the responsibility of all staff involved in Water Regulations activities to adhere to this Code of Practice and the associated strategy/processes, and the Water Regulations Management will conduct periodic audits to ensure compliance.

10. Review

This Code of Practice shall be reviewed on an annual basis taking into account any changes in the law or learning points from the industry.

11. Information & Contacts

Thames Water Utilities
Water Regulations Dept
PO Box 286
Swindon
SN38 2RN

Telephone: 0800.316.9800

Email: water.regulations@thameswater.co.uk

Website: www.thameswater.co.uk

Please note, the Water Regulations team works Monday to Friday 08:00 to 16:00hrs

Water Regs UK Limited

Water Regs UK Limited is a subscription membership company limited by guarantee and was incorporated on the 4th of August 2008. The subscribers of Water Regs UK Limited are the 26 UK Water Suppliers, it is an advisory body whose role includes the provision of a free technical enquiry service and the online publication of a directory of fittings and materials that have been tested and shown to comply with The Regulations.

Water Regs UK Limited
Unit 13 Willow Road Pen-y-Fan
Industrial Estate Crumlin
Gwent NP11 4EG

Telephone: 01495 98 30 10

Email: info@waterregsuk.co.uk

Website: www.waterregsuk.co.uk

You can obtain a free version of the Regulations online, but please note that the version available online may not show all of the amendments that have been made to the Regulations since they were made in 1999.

The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 (legislation.gov.uk)

WaterSafe

WaterSafe is a free online search facility funded by the water industry to help customers find competent and qualified plumbers in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

The scheme is a national accreditation body which checks and approves businesses and their plumbers to give customers reassurance about the tradesmen undertaking work for them.

It brings together thousands of qualified contractors employed by companies right across the UK.

Learn more about WaterSafe and how find an approved plumber and learn more about WaterSafe please visit the links shown below

<https://www.thameswater.co.uk/help/home-improvements/find-a-plumber>

<https://www.watersafe.org.uk/>

Appendix A (Glossary)

Waste – Includes situations where water supplied by Thames Water is allowed to run to waste through faulty installations/appliances or due to poor maintenance or leaking fittings such as dripping taps and valves. *(e.g. leakage from leaking pipes and dripping taps)*

Misuse – Includes situations where water supplied by Thames Water is used for any purpose other than that for which it is supplied. *(e.g. water supplied by Thames Water for domestic purposes being used for non-domestic purposes)*

Undue consumption – This includes the operation of water fittings/appliances that use more water than the purpose for which they were designed, or more water than is reasonable in comparison with other fittings or appliances serving similar purposes. *(e.g. water levels not set correctly in WC cisterns causing more than the required amount of water to be used to flush the toilet)*

Contamination of water supplied by Thames Water – This includes any reduction in the aesthetic, chemical or biological quality of any water supplied by Thames Water, for example as a result of raising its temperature or the introduction of polluting substances.

Erroneous measurement – This includes the by-passing of a water meter, the taking-off of a supply upstream of a water meter or tampering with a water meter resulting in interference with the measurement of water passing through the meter. *(e.g. the unauthorised use or theft of water)*

Backflow – Water flow in a direction contrary to the intended normal direction of flow, within a plumbing system which poses a risk of contaminating the water supply. *(e.g. contaminants being sucked or pushed back into the plumbing system from heating systems/WC cisterns etc. posing a risk to drinking water quality in the water main)*

Certificate of compliance – Approved Plumbers will issue the customer with a certificate of compliance upon completion of works to confirm that the work they have carried out complies with the requirements of the Regulations. The certificate can be offered in defence of any prosecution brought by Thames Water for breach of the Regulations.

Reduced Pressure Zone' valve installations – Reduced Pressure Zone valves also known as RPZ valves are specialised backflow prevention devices which have specific installation criteria including the requirement for the valve to be tested at regular intervals *(timescales will be set by Thames Water)* to ensure it is functioning correctly.

Appendix B (Notification Requirements)

Circumstances where premises owners must notify Thames Water prior to commencement of the activity:

The Regulations require prior notification to be submitted to Thames Water of proposals to undertake certain types of plumbing works even if undertaken by a water industry Approved Plumber.

The full regulatory definitions of types of plumbing work that require prior notification to Thames Water can be found via the following link:

The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 (legislation.gov.uk)

In summary:

Prior notification is required for the erection of any new building or other structure to which a new water supply is intended to be provided.

Customers intending to undertake plumbing works in existing domestic and non-domestic premises are not generally required to notify unless they are intending to :

- Install a specific water treatment appliance, in particular those that generate a wastewater discharge (such as a water softener/reverse osmosis etc).
- Install certain types of water pump (which exceed a flow rate of 12 litres per minute), although most domestic pumped systems, e.g. a 'power shower', do not pump at such a high rate and therefore do not require notification.
- construct a large pond or pool (such as a swimming pool) which exceeds 10,000 litres in capacity which has a direct/indirect connection to the water supply to facilitate its filling or replenishment.

Customers intending to undertake any extension or alternation to plumbing systems in non-domestic/commercial premises are generally required to notify prior to the commencement of the proposed plumbing works unless the work is being carried out by a water industry approved plumber who will issue both the customer and Thames Water a certificate of compliance on completion of the works.

The replacement of like for like fittings/appliances in non-domestic/commercial premises would be viewed by Thames Water as being exempt from the requirement to notification in their area of supply.

If you are uncertain about whether your plumbing work requires notification, we would be happy to advise you. If you require any help or advice, please do not hesitate to call our customer centre on 0800 316 9800 and ask for a call back from the Water Regulations team, or e-mail us at water.regulations@thameswater.co.uk

Please note, the Water Regulations team works Monday to Friday 08:00 to 16:00hrs