



# What to do if sewer flooding affects your home



## We're really sorry if you've been affected by sewer flooding – we understand just how unpleasant and distressing this can be.

We hope we can address some of your concerns, by answering the questions you may have and providing further information and advice.

## What to do if your home is flooded

### Step 1 – Call us on 0800 316 9800

If you think your home has been flooded from one of our sewers, please call us immediately. We take sewer flooding very seriously and will do all we can to stop the flooding and investigate the cause.

### Step 2 – Contact your insurance provider

Once you've contacted us, you'll need to contact your insurer and let them know what's happened. They may be able to help you in a number of ways – for instance, arranging a professional clean, replacing damaged items and finding you somewhere to stay if you need it.

This step is really important. Please remember, if you don't tell your insurer about something like sewer flooding, you'll be breaching the terms and conditions of your policy.

### Our next steps

We'll begin the clean-up on the same day if we can, but we'll have to wait for most of the water to soak away before we can start work.

If the outside of your property has flooded, we'll get to you as quickly as we can. But we do have to prioritise those customers in greatest need, which includes those who have flooding inside their home.

## The clean-up

### When we come to clean up, this will include:

- Removing excess liquids
- Removing most of what has discharged from the sewer
- Disinfecting hard surfaced areas, such as driveways, paths and decking (outside only)

Please note, we can only clean underneath decking if it's been lifted for us in advance.

### What we aren't able to do

In most cases, we're not liable for damage caused by flooding – for example, because we can't prevent people causing blockages by tipping fat, concrete and other unsuitable materials into our sewers. This means we're not able to:

- Dry out your property
- Remove or replace damaged items
- Provide alternative accommodation

In most cases, we're also not able to pay compensation for loss or damage to your contents or property.

This is another reason why it's so important to contact your own insurer, who will be able to advise further on these issues.



# Staying safe

Staying safe is the most important thing right now.

Please make sure you:

- Keep children and pets well away from flooded areas
- Wash your hands, and your children's hands, frequently
- Wear protective clothing, such as rubber gloves and a mask, if you're cleaning
- Throw away any food that may have been in contact with the flood water
- Call your doctor straight away if you suffer any symptoms like diarrhoea or vomiting after a flood
- Carefully check your electrical appliances aren't damaged or wet before using them

## Your drinking water

Please don't worry about your drinking water. The pipes that carry it are sealed and kept under pressure – even if there's a leak, they'll force out clean water and won't let anything in. This means it will be safe to use.

If you have any concerns or questions about your drinking water, please get in touch.

## Avoiding contact with externally flooded areas

You'll need to keep off any externally flooded areas for a while. The time required varies depending on the weather, as ultraviolet light in sunlight helps kill off bacteria.

Use the table below to see how long you and your pets should avoid flooded areas.

Season	Turf/clay	Soil/sand/shingle/bark
Spring	13 days	20 days
Summer	6 days	9 days
Autumn	13 days	20 days
Winter	18 days	11 days

If you grow fruit or vegetables, you'll need to destroy any that have been in contact with, or near to, wastewater. And make sure you don't grow crops on any flooded soil for 12 months.

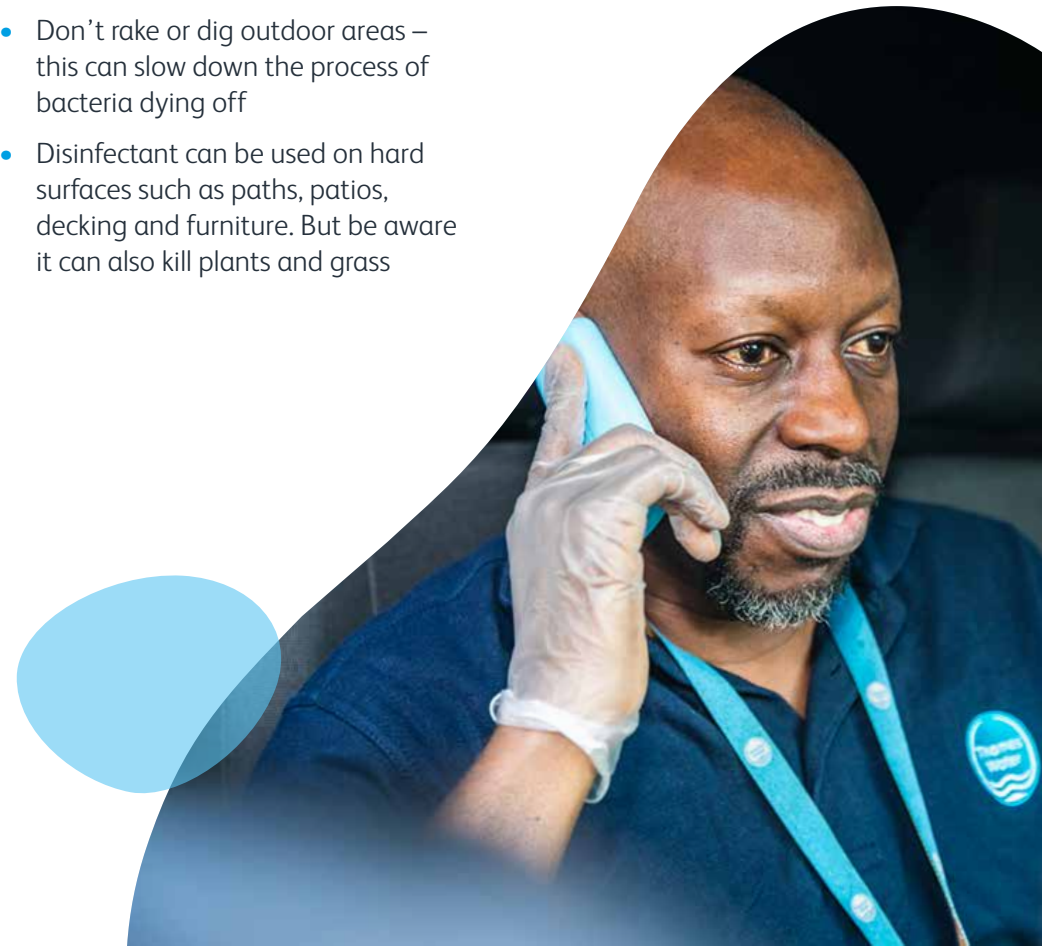
## Cleaning your home

Don't forget your home insurance company may be able to help you. Make sure you take plenty of photos or videos of any flooding damage before you start to clean – these can help with your claim.

Some things to remember if you're cleaning your property yourself:

- Use food-safe disinfectant to thoroughly wash down kitchen work surfaces and storage areas
- Don't rake or dig outdoor areas – this can slow down the process of bacteria dying off
- Disinfectant can be used on hard surfaces such as paths, patios, decking and furniture. But be aware it can also kill plants and grass

- Using a heater and opening the windows can speed up the drying process, for indoor flooding. But you should wait until the flood water has gone before doing this
- Don't use petrol or diesel generators or similar equipment indoors, as these produce dangerous exhaust fumes

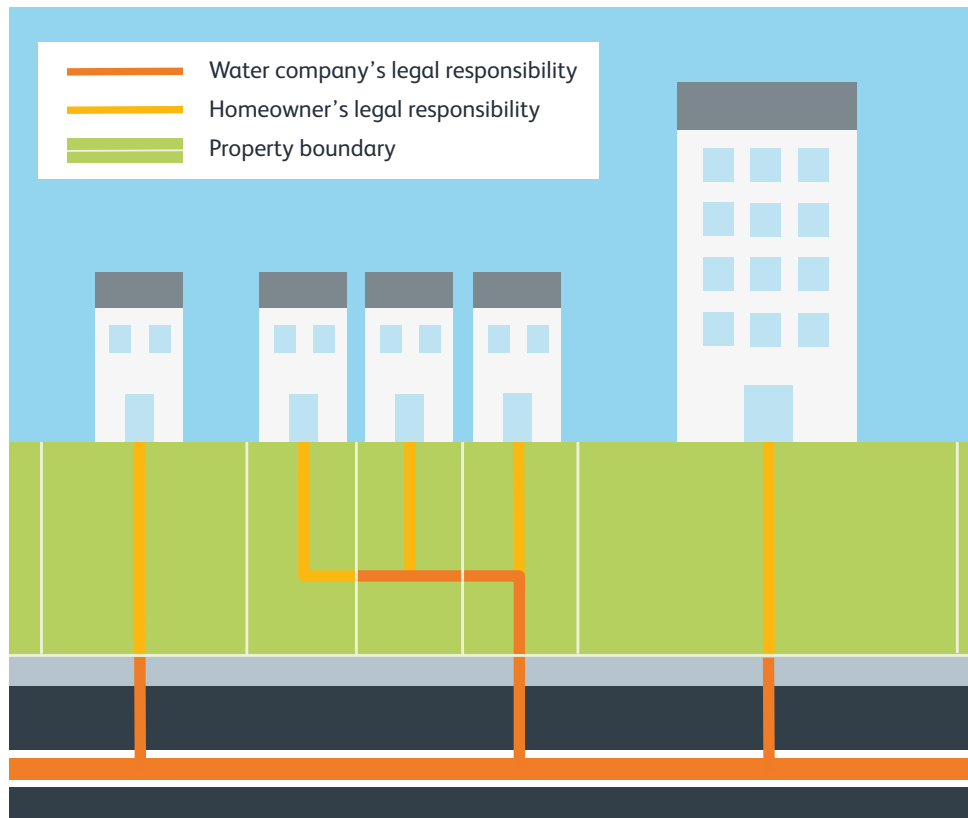


# What causes sewer flooding?

A number of things can lead to sewer flooding:

- Cooking fat, wet wipes and sanitary care products – these can all create blockages which cause flooding
- Population growth
- Extreme weather – sewers are designed to cope with storms, but very heavy rainfall can occasionally overwhelm the system
- Green spaces being paved over – this prevents natural drainage and more rain runs into our sewers
- Illegal connections to a sewer
- Building or tarmacking over manhole covers

## Who owns your sewer?



## Our customer commitment

Sewer flooding is never a pleasant experience, so we want to make sure you're fully supported.

If you're a household customer and the inside of your home is flooded with wastewater from our sewers, we'll automatically credit your account. The amount will be equal to the annual wastewater service charge you pay for the property.

If the outside of your property is flooded with wastewater from our sewers, you may be able to claim an amount equal to half of your annual wastewater service charge. Your eligibility depends on the severity of any damage, financial loss or impact on quality of life you've experienced.

You'll need to make the claim in writing, within three months of the incident.

Visit [thameswater.co.uk/customercommitment](https://www.thameswater.co.uk/customercommitment) for our online Customer Guarantee Scheme claims form or call us on **0800 316 9800** so we can send you a claim form.

If you're a business customer, your retailer will credit your account. Please get in touch with them to find out more.

# Who else can help?

Flooding can be a complex issue and we sometimes won't be the best people to help. Here's who to contact if you're affected by the following issues:

## Public sewer flooding

To report flooding from one of our sewers, please call us on **0800 316 9800**.

## Highway flooding

To report flooding from roads, gullies or ditches, please contact your local highway authority.

## Land drainage or groundwater flooding

To report flooding that's run off nearby land or seeped up through the ground, please contact your local council and insurance company.

## River flooding

If a river has burst its banks and it's affecting or worrying you, contact the Environment Agency on **0800 807 060**.

## Rainwater drain issues

If your rainwater drains are blocked or overflowing, please contact a plumber to get these cleared.

If your rainwater drains are overflowing with sewage then they'll be connected to a combined sewer drain – please contact us using the details below.



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



**0800 316 9800**

