



Private Blockages

Code of Practice

Purpose

This document sets out our approach when we find a blockage in a private pipe within our wholesale operational area. It provides our employees and customers with clarity regarding the service we will provide and compliance with this code of practice enables us to ensure all customers receive the same service.

For the avoidance of doubt, this code of practice applies to all private pipes within our wholesale operational area, including those owned by both household and non-household customers.

Key principles

The key principles which have shaped the development of this code of practice are as follows:

- Thames Water, via its contractor will investigate any blockage to determine whether it can be classified as a private blockage or not. If any issue is identified within the Thames Water owned part of the sewerage system, then Thames Water via its contractor will resolve the issue.
- This practice covers issues which are found to be located in the private section of the sewerage system.
- The owner(s) of a private pipe have the choice to use other contractors to clear their private issue.
- Thames Water cannot provide a private blockage clearance as part of our primary charges.
- In certain circumstances the Thames Water contractor may offer a 'there and then' private blockage clearance service, for a fee.
- The private blockage clearance service may not always be provided eg due to work complexity or availability of resources.
- If during the course of investigation we clear a private blockage, no charge will be applied.
- We will inform the owner(s) of the private pipe(s) that a future blockage in the same area requires private clearance.

Who this code of practice applies to:

Thames Water employees and contractors.

Code of practice

Call handling

- We are available for customers to contact us 24/7, 365 days a year.
- When a customer calls to report a blockage, we will collect information about them, including their address, whether the property they are calling about is household or non-household and the appropriate retailer.
- If during the initial call we determine the issue to be private responsibility, we will advise the customer and will not continue with the service and will not attend or investigate further.
- We will collect information from the customer about the symptoms, situation and impact to help a decision about whether a visit is needed, and if so, the

appropriate timescale for attendance. We will share with the customer (impacted party) the next steps and raise on the system the most appropriate action(s).

Cancelling visits

- We may cancel our visit where we're already investigating or aware of the issue, alternatively where we have found the issue to be a third party or private asset.

Call en-route

- While we are on our way to attend an incident, we will attempt to contact the customer (impacted party) and advise that we are en-route.
- We will attempt to contact the customer (impacted party) if we cannot meet our agreed customer promise.

Investigation

- When on site, we will begin investigations and may need to liaise directly with the customer to discuss the problem in more detail or gain access to manhole covers inside the property boundary.
- In the course of investigations, we will use equipment available to diagnose the issue and help determine if it's within an asset that is our responsibility.
- Where investigations reveal the issue is within a private pipe, we may offer a blockage clearance service on a chargeable basis. This decision will be based on:
 - available equipment on site
 - time required to fix
 - whether higher priority work exists.
- We will not offer private blockage clearance where the issue relates to internal drainage issues within the property.
- During the course of our investigation, where we clear a blockage that is later discovered to be in the customer's (impacted party) private section of the pipe we will not charge for a private clearance.

Customer offer (if applicable)

- Where the blockage is in a section of a pipe which is the customer's (impacted party) responsibility we may offer a blockage clearance service. The customer (impacted party) can choose to:
 - accept our offer
 - make alternative arrangements e.g. choose an alternative drainage contractor, contact their insurance company, contact their landlord or local authority.

Updating the customer

- Following investigation, we'll share the outcome of the visit with the customer (impacted party).

Notification to retailer(s)

- This section only applies to blockages on the private pipes owned by the non-household customer.

- If an appointment is booked we will notify the retailer within 2 business days of this being made. If this appointment date or time is changed, or cancelled, we'll notify the retailer of this change.
- Within 2 days of our visit to investigate, we'll notify the retailer of the visit.
- Where we have identified that additional customers are impacted or we need access to neighbouring customer properties, we'll notify the additional retailer(s).

Responsibilities

All employees and contractors must conduct all business in line with this policy and speak up when if something is right

Line managers must communicate the details of this code of practice to employees and contractors

Wholesale Market Services must communicate this policy to customers

When to speak up

As a retailer, if you have any queries or concerns regarding this code of practice you can contact us by emailing our Wholesale Service Desk wholesalemarketservices@thameswater.co.uk.

As an employee you commit to:

- Complying with this code of practice
- Reporting any concerns

If you have a concern about any issues relating our private blockage performance or management arrangements, or you have a question about this code of practice you can speak to the code of practice owner or any of the following:

Tell your line manager

This doesn't have to be your immediate line manager

Speak to us in confidence

07747 640 072
investigations@tha

Report anonymously
0800 917 6936

thameswaterspeakup
.co.uk

Write to the CEO
Thames Water Utilities Ltd
Clearwater Court
Reading RG1 8DB

Glossary

Customer -The individual party that originally contacted us to report a blockage, including: the property owner, occupier, neighbouring property, passer-by, local authority or any other third party agency (Environment Agency) as well as the impacted party, if different (where applies to one specific group, it will be referred appropriately)

Operational area - The geographical area where we provide water and wastewater services. A separate operational area exists for water and wastewater services.

