



Code of Practice on Leakage

Reporting an emergency or leak

If you spot a leak from our pipes please call us on 0800 316 2190.

Our emergency service team are available 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. We will arrange to get the leak fixed as quickly as possible.

Useful Phone Numbers

Questions or Enquiries about your bill or the charges you pay

0800 980 1391 Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm and Saturday 8am to 2pm

If you are deaf or hard of hearing and have a textline, please contact us on 0800 622 839.

Enquiries about Water Quality, Leaks or anything else about our pipes

0800 316 2190 365 days a year, 24 hours a day

Careline – for customers with special needs

0800 980 1387 Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm and Saturday 8am to 2pm

Information in this leaflet is available in alternative formats such as large print text. Please contact our Careline on **0800 980 1387** to discuss your requirements.

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1. Introduction

This is our code of practice on leakage which has been approved for domestic customers by the Water Services Regulation Authority (referred to in the rest of this code of practice as Ofwat). Ofwat is the economic regulator of the water and sewerage industry in England and Wales. The code explains the services we offer and tells you what to do if you spot a leak or think you have a leak on your property. Most of the information included in this code also applies to commercial customers, except where reference is made to domestic customers.

Copies of this code are available on our website at www.swalec.co.uk. We will also send a copy free of charge in response to a request. To request a copy please call our customer service team on 0800 980 1391.

Our full contact details can be found in section 8 of this leaflet.

We produce a range of helpful leaflets about our services. For more details please see section 10 of this leaflet.

About us

SWALEC is a water and sewerage service provider. Our business is to supply treated water to customers and to connect new customers to a water supply. We also provide a sewerage treatment service which includes drainage for surface water.

On the 3rd October 2007, Ofwat appointed us as a new water and sewerage company by granting a new licence. This licence effectively means we replace the existing water and/or sewerage company in a specific geographical area and provide water and/or sewerage services to all customers in that area.

We operate to the same high standards as every other licensed water company in England and Wales

SWALEC is a trading name of SSE Water Limited which is a member of the Scottish and Southern Energy Group; we're one of the UK's largest energy companies. We're a FTSE 100 company and we own the largest electricity distribution network in the UK. Today, millions of customers trust us to look after their electricity and gas supply.

Much of the information in this code only applies where we provide water supply services. If you receive a water supply from another company, you should get in touch with them about leaks – their contact details will be given on their bills.

2. If you think you have a leaking pipe

If the leak is in our pipe

If you spot a leak from our pipes please call us on 0800 316 2190.

Our emergency service team are available 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. We will arrange to get the leak fixed as quickly as possible.

If the leak is in your pipe

If you think your pipe is leaking, please call our emergency service team on 0800 316 2190.

We will arrange a free inspection and offer help and advice to get the leak fixed. It is important that all leaks are repaired as quickly as possible. SWALEC offers a free leak repair service.

Please see section 6 for further detail. If you are a tenant you will need to contact your landlord in order to ask them to contact us to get the leak repaired.

Section 5 of this leaflet gives more information on how to check for leaks. You can monitor your water usage as well as check for leaking pipes.

Because you pay for your water and wastewater services according to the volume of water that passes through the meter, we will also consider adjusting your charges, subject to certain conditions. More information about the leakage allowance is given in section 7 of this leaflet.

You are responsible for repairing leaks on your pipework. We may take action under Section 75 of the Water Industry Act 1991 if we find that water is being wasted at your property. We have powers to serve a legal notice on you requiring you to repair any leaks on your pipework. If you fail to carry out the necessary repairs we may carry out the work ourselves and recover the costs from you.

In extreme circumstances, for example if a property is empty and a property owner has not registered an account with us or if there is a danger to public health and safety, we may be within our rights to turn off the supply. We want to help and will only take this action as a last resort.

3. Responsibility for the water meter

All water meters that we install remain our property and we maintain them.

We select the location of your meter in line with the regulations made by the government. There are normally three possible locations:

- Outside, adjacent to the property wall, preferably in the soft part of the garden

- Outside, at the boundary with the road or footpath
- Inside the property

We prefer meters to be fitted outside – normally in the footpath next to the stop valve at the property boundary. As it is not always possible to fit meters outside, sometimes they may have to be inside the house (usually under the kitchen sink) or in an outhouse or garage.

If you want us to relocate your meter, we will expect you to pay the cost of this work. However, if you find reading the meter difficult due to its location and you are on our Careline register and in receipt of certain benefits, we may be able to relocate the meter free of charge. Alternatively, we can provide a service whereby we read your meter four times a year. Please phone us on 0800 980 1391 if you would like to discuss this further.

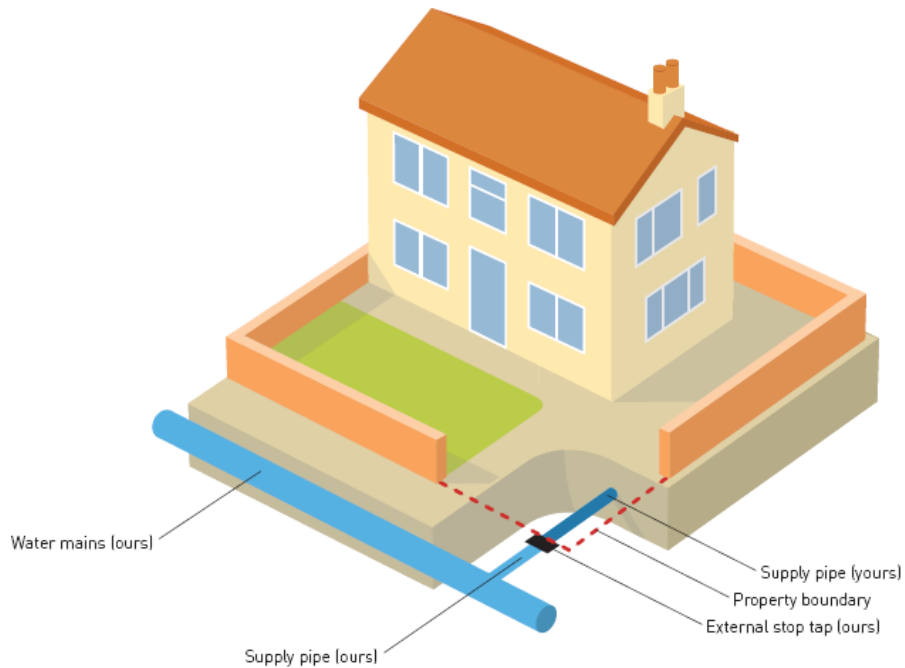
4. Responsibilities – whose pipe is it anyway?

Our pipes

We are responsible for the water main in the road and the part of the supply pipe which runs from our main to a point at or near the boundary of your property. We look after our own pipes and repair any leaks we find on them. In the majority of cases we will do this as soon as possible, but we will need to gain permission from the local council before we dig up the footpath or road.

Your pipes

The rest of the pipework taking the water into the property is your responsibility or your landlord's. This is your part of the supply pipe (see the diagram below) also known as the service pipe.



It is your responsibility to maintain this pipe, stopping leaks and mending it when it bursts – just as you would maintain the plumbing inside your property. It is still your responsibility if it runs under other properties before reaching yours.

Section 5 of this leaflet gives more information on how to check for leaks in your supply pipe.

In our day-to-day leakage detection operations we may find leaks on our customers' pipes. If we find a leak on your service pipe, we will tell you about it and offer you advice on how to get it repaired. Our leakage detection and repair service is free in most cases as discussed in section 6. It is not always possible to pinpoint the exact position of a leak, particularly where the pipe runs beneath a building. During his visit, our technician will advise you which section of pipework is leaking.

If you are unsure of the layout of your pipework, please call us for help on 0800 980 1391.

5. How to check for leaks

Taking regular meter readings not only helps you to check your bill is correct, but will also highlight any significant and unexpected increase in your use of water. It may also indicate a possible leak.

If you get an unusually high metered bill, it may indicate that your supply pipe is leaking.

Other indicators may be:

- reduced water pressure or flow at your kitchen tap

- damp or waterlogged areas in your garden, even during spells of dry weather
- noisy pipework.

If your water meter is fitted externally there is a simple test you can do to check for leakage:

- Turn off your stop valve in the home (usually under the kitchen sink)
- Make sure no cisterns are filling or taps are being used
- Read the meter
- Leave the stop valve shut and then read the meter again in half an hour
- The meter dial should not have moved, as you have been using no water. If it has moved, there may be a leak between the meter and the stop valve in your house.

If you think that your supply pipe is leaking then please call our emergency service team on 0800 316 2190.

We will arrange a free inspection and offer help and advice to get the leak fixed. It is important that all leaks are repaired as quickly as possible. SWALEC offers a free leak repair service. Please see section 6 for further detail. If you are a tenant you will need to contact your landlord in order to ask them to contact us to get the leak repaired.

6. Our free leak repair service

Customers are responsible for repairing leaks on their part of the supply pipe – known as their service pipe.

SWALEC offers a free leak repair service subject to some conditions, which are discussed below. We will repair leaks on external underground service pipes to domestic properties free of charge with no restrictions on the number of repairs. For commercial customers, the free leak repair service is limited to one per premises within a five year period. If you want to find out more about this service please call us on 0800 980 1391 or visit our website at www.swalec.co.uk.

If a leak is found at your premises and you pay your water charges direct to SWALEC then you may be eligible for a leakage allowance, as explained in section 7 of this leaflet.

Repair and replacement of pipes

We will require written agreement before we can start. If you are a tenant you will need to contact your landlord to get the leak repaired and the landlord can also take advantage of our free leak repair service.

If we find a leak at your property, we will serve a legal notice explaining that you have 14 days to either accept our offer of a free repair (or pipe replacement where appropriate) or to arrange to have the leak repaired yourself. If no action is taken within 14 days, we will send you a second notice. However, if no action has been taken after 28 days, we will send a third and final notice explaining that we have to make a repair in accordance with our statutory duties. At this stage our repair/replacement offer will be removed. We will also look to recover reasonable costs in these circumstances.

Our free repair/replacement service applies to any external underground pipe up to a length of 50 metres, between the stop valve in the footpath and the wall of the property. We will not repair leaking pipes underneath homes or outbuildings.

Internal leaks are not covered by our repair service and you will need a plumber or contractor to do this work.

We will always try to minimise disruption by reinstating the excavated area to a good and safe standard. We cannot, however, return all driveways or gardens to their original condition. However, please be assured that we will discuss this with you before we start. As the pipe belongs to you, you are not obliged to accept our offer and can arrange for your own contractor to complete this work. However, if you do not complete the repair, we have the right to do the work ourselves and recover our costs from you.

7. Leakage allowance

If a leak is found or confirmed at your premises, whoever pays the water service charges for a metered supply – owner occupier, landlord or tenant – may be eligible for a leakage allowance. This will be whether SWALEC repairs the pipe or whether a private contractor is used. This allowance is for both clean and waste water.

This is subject to certain conditions:

- The leak must be repaired within 6 weeks of it being confirmed;
- An allowance will not be given if the leak was caused through negligence or wilful damage, or where the leak has been caused by a third party from whom a customer can recover money to pay for the leakage; and
- Allowances are only considered for leaks in external pipes that are laid underground (this excludes leakage from internal fixtures and fittings).

If we have repaired the leak, we will adjust your account automatically. If you believe you are entitled to an adjustment after having repaired the leak yourself, would like to query whether an adjustment should have been made to your account, or do not meet the above criteria but feel there are exceptional circumstances, please write to us and we will consider your claim on its

own merits. The claim should reach us within 18 months of you receiving the bill you think needs to be adjusted.

As soon as you tell us you have a leak, we will send you a form so that you can claim the allowance. Please call us on 0800 980 1391 if you would like a form. The form should be returned to us as soon as the leak has been repaired. When it is received we will apply the allowance as soon as is reasonably practical for valid claims. This allowance may be claimed for each leak which occurs on your service pipe.

Calculating the leakage allowance

SWALEC makes an allowance for clean and waste water charges, depending on the services we provide to you. However where we are not your waste water company, we will contact your waste water company to arrange for a similar allowance to be made to your waste water charges. Similarly, if we only provide your waste water services, your water supply company will contact us about making a leakage allowance adjustment to the bill you receive from us.

If there is a leak from a metered supply to a domestic property, as long as the leak is fixed within six weeks of it being confirmed, we will not charge for the amount of water that has been lost through leakage.

The adjustment will be based on how much water has been used in the past, with the maximum leakage allowance given for two billing periods plus the leak repair time of a maximum of six weeks. If there is no record of past use, an adjustment will be made based on typical water use for a similar property. If the typical water use is significantly lower after the leak has been fixed we will consider granting a further leakage allowance.

If there is a leak from a metered supply to a commercial property, as long as the leak is fixed within six weeks of it being confirmed, the leakage allowance will be calculated in line with the following:

- 100% rebate of the leaked water volume for the first leak
- 10% rebate of the leaked water volume for subsequent leaks.

If the property is of 'mixed use', meaning that part of the building is used for commercial purposes and part for domestic use, for example a shop with a flat above, or where the leak is on a service pipe delivering water to both commercial and residential properties, we will agree a percentage adjustment as provided by the customer for subsequent leaks. We will then calculate the total amount lost to leakage and apply the appropriate leakage allowance according to the domestic/commercial split of the property affected.

8. Getting in touch

If you have a question concerning a leak or any of the services we offer then please call us on 0800 980 1391. We are open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 2pm on Saturdays. However, if we do not provide your water supply service, we suggest that, for leakage matters, you contact the company who does.

We prefer you to phone rather than write because it is quicker, more direct and easier for us to answer your questions straight away. But if you want to write, our address is:

SWALEC PO Box 360 Portsmouth PO6 2YJ

You can also contact us through our website at www.swalec.co.uk or by sending a fax message to 02392 277317.

If you are deaf or hard of hearing and have a textline, please contact us on 0800 622 839.

If you have any queries about the information or commitments set out in this code of practice, you can contact us as set out above. Alternatively, you can e-mail our customer service team at customerservice@swalec.co.uk

9. What to do if you are unhappy

As a SWALEC customer we believe you are entitled to a high level of service from us. We want to hear from you if you are disappointed with the service you have received. It is important to us that you tell us where we have been going wrong so we can improve our service for the future.

If you would like to ask someone else to complain on your behalf then we will accept the details from them. We will need to check that they have authority from you to discuss your account if this is necessary to resolve your complaint.

We carefully monitor complaints so that we can avoid making the same mistakes again. If something goes wrong, we want you to tell us. Then we can put it right and make sure the same thing doesn't happen to someone else.

If you are unhappy with any service or contact you have with us, please phone us on 0800 980 1391, or if you want to write, our address is: SWALEC PO Box 360 Portsmouth PO6 2YJ. You can also email us about your complaint by using the following address:

customerservice@swalec.co.uk

If you tell us you are not happy with the way we dealt with your enquiry or delivered a service, we will do our best to sort things out immediately.

If you are still not satisfied, please ask to speak to a manager. Alternatively, you can write to us or email explaining why you are unhappy.

We will respond within 10 working days from the date we receive your contact. If we do not respond to you in this time then we will make a payment to you under our Guaranteed Standards Scheme.

If you are still not satisfied, you can raise the matter with our Director of Customer Service, who you can contact at:

Director of Customer Service
PO Box 7506
Perth
PH1 3QR

We aim to contact you within 48 hours of receiving your letter to sort out your problem. Then we aim to resolve all issues within 10 working days of our Director of Customer Service receiving your complaint.

If you are not happy at the end of the two week period you have the right to an independent adjudicator who can help you. This independent body is the Consumer Council for Water who is the water watchdog. They represent the interests of water and sewerage customers and have a legal duty to deal with customer complaints. This is a free service available to you.

The Consumer Council for Water will review the facts relating to your case and deal with the matter on your behalf. If they consider your complaint to be justified, we will be asked to take the appropriate action to put things right.

To refer your complaint you need to write to the Consumer Council for Water including any responses you have received from SWALEC. Their contact details are:

Consumer Council for Water
1st Floor, Victoria Square House
Victoria Square
Birmingham B2 4AJ
Telephone: 0121 345 1017, local rate 0845 702 3953
Fax: 0121 345 1010
Email: central@ccwater.org.uk
Website www.ccwater.org.uk
Office hours Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm

10. Other leaflets we produce

We produce a range of helpful leaflets about our water and waste water services. These include:

Code of Practice for Customers

Code of Practice on Debt Recovery

Water Charges summary leaflet

Water Charges Scheme

Promises to You leaflet

Guaranteed Standards Scheme

Water Savings Advice

These leaflets are available on our website at www.swalec.co.uk or may be obtained by calling our customer services team on 0800 980 1391.