



Code of Practice for Customers

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

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

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1. Introduction

This is our code of practice for customers, which explains the services we offer and tells you what to do if you have any problems. This code of practice has been approved 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.

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 13 of this leaflet.

We produce a range of helpful leaflets about our services. For more details please see section 17 of this leaflet.

About us

SWALEC is your local water and sewerage service provider. Our business is to supply treated water to our customers and to connect all new customers to a water supply. We also provide a sewage 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 company for a specific geographical area and provide water and 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.

2. Your bill and payment options

Your bill

We try to ensure that your water bill is easy to understand. On the front of your bill you will find a summary of the key information that you need. However, if you do have a query, then you will find further explanation on the back (large print and Braille bills contain all this information on

separate pages). This should answer most of your questions about how your bill is worked out and how to pay.

If you have further queries you can telephone our customer service team on [redacted] and speak with a customer services representative on Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm and Saturday 8am to 2pm.

We will send you a bill every six months. We expect you to make payment within 28 days.

The bill includes the charges for the water you have used and the sewerage you have disposed of from your property. It also includes standing charges for both services. Full details of our charges are described in our charges scheme. To request a copy of our charges scheme please call our customer service team on [redacted].

All our customers have a meter installed. This means that charges are based on a standing charge plus the amount of water you use which is measured using a meter. Water is measured in cubic metres as it flows through your water meter. Usually your water meter will be fitted in an underground chamber outside your home as near to the property boundary as possible. Sometimes this may be just outside your property boundary in the pavement. You will find a lid marked 'water' covering the chamber.

When we take a reading from your meter we read the black figures which register cubic metres and disregard the red figures.

The black figures record whole cubic metres – we use these figures to bill you. The red figures record litres and tenths of litres.

You should check your meter regularly because it can help you detect whether you have a leak, which could affect the size of your bill.

If you think your meter is faulty please call us on [redacted]. We will investigate and, if necessary, fix or replace the meter. If we consider that the meter is accurate but you do not agree, you can ask us to arrange for the meter to be tested independently. You will see a copy of the test results and will only have to pay a charge if the test shows that the meter is working accurately. There are more details on this process in our approved Charges Scheme, which is available on our website at www.swalec.co.uk or may be obtained by calling our customer service team on [redacted].

Payment options

The easiest way to pay your bill is by direct debit from your bank or building society. You can set up a direct debit for either monthly payments or for the total bill value. Simply complete the direct debit form with your bill and we will do the rest.

Alternatively, you may also pay using the following methods:

- by standing order;
- by cash or cheque at your bank or building society;

- by cash or cheque at any branch of our bank, which is Natwest (National Westminster Bank Plc);
- by your own internet or telebanking facilities;
- by cheque at our head office, 55 Vastern Road, Reading, RG1 8BU;
- by post to: Customer Accounts, SWALEC, PO Box 360, Portsmouth PO6 2YJ

If you have difficulty making payment by any of the options listed above or would prefer to pay more frequently then please call our customer service team on so that we can discuss your requirements and agree a suitable payment option. We will not charge any extra for any of the above methods of payment but please note that your bank or building society may make charges for certain types of payment.

Estimated bills

We aim to read your meter every 6 months so will need access to your meter to do this. If we cannot read your meter we may need to estimate your bill and this will be based on how much water you have used in the preceding period. You can take your own meter readings to make sure you are charged accurately and call us on **0800 980 1391**. We will use this reading to produce a new bill for you. We will send you a replacement bill within 10 working days.

If your meter reading is higher than usual and you feel you have used no more water than normal, you may have a leak. We are responsible if the leak is on the meter itself, and legally you are responsible for repairing leaks on the supply pipe (see section 5 'Responsibility for pipework'). If you think you have a leak, contact us on 0800 316 2190 so we can offer you advice and (if appropriate) help you repair the leak.

For more information about leaks please contact our customer service team on **0800 980 1391** and ask for a copy of our code of practice on leakage.

Account queries and requests

If you have a query regarding your bill please call our customer service team on **0800 980 1391** (Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm and Saturday 8am to 2pm) and we will be happy to help.

If you write to us to query the accuracy of a bill SWALEC have sent to you for either the supply of water or waste water services to your premises, we will reply within 10 working days of receipt of your letter. If we are unable to agree to a request from you to change your payment arrangements, we will let you know within 5 working days of receiving your written request. If we do not keep these promises, we will make a payment to you under our Guaranteed Standards Scheme.

Please see section 15 below for a summary of our Guaranteed Standards Scheme. To see the full version of our Guaranteed Standards Scheme please visit our website at www.swalec.co.uk or call our customer service team on **0800 980 1391** and ask for a copy of our Guaranteed Standards Scheme.

3. Our charges

Our charges are regulated by the Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat). Ofwat is the economic regulator of the water and sewerage industry in England and Wales. Their role is to set price limits at a level that allows well-managed companies to finance the services they deliver. They will allow water companies to meet your needs and the needs of the environment while continuing to deliver a safe and reliable service.

They set a limit on the average change that companies can make to your bill in each year. Price limits were last set in December 2004 for the five years 2005-06 to 2009-10. Average bills since privatisation (1989-90) have increased to allow companies to finance improved quality standards and service levels. The increase would have been far greater if the companies had not become more efficient in response to regulation.

SWALEC can set prices no higher than the surrounding water company and the prices we charge are reviewed by OFWAT each year.

We produce an annual charges scheme that sets out the charges for the services we offer. If you would like a copy of our Charges Scheme then please call our customer service team on **0800 980 1391**.

Metered charges for the water you use

We fit a meter to every property so the charges are based on the amount of water you use. Sewerage is normally charged on the assumption that 95% of the water used returns to the sewer. The remaining 5% is accounted for by evaporation, car washing, garden watering and allowance for variations during wet and dry years.

Metered standing charges

The standing charges are fixed annual charges. There is a standing charge for water supply and also one for sewerage services. These cover the costs of reading the meter plus its repair and replacement when required.

Surface drainage charges

Waste water services charges include an element covering the disposal of surface water (rainwater) from customers' properties. Most properties are connected to our sewers for this purpose. But some properties, mainly in rural areas, are not connected and have other arrangements such as special 'soakaways'. If surface water from your property does not drain to our sewers, you do not have to pay for this service. If you believe that you do not receive the service, please contact our customer service team on **0800 980 1391**.

Tampering with meters

It is a criminal offence to tamper with a water meter. The water meter remains the property of SWALEC.

Liability for charges

Water service charges are payable for all premises to which a supply of water is made available, whether or not the supplies are actually used. Charges for water supplies are to be paid by the occupier of the property except where there is an agreement between a third party and the company.

If you live in rented accommodation, it is not always easy to see who is legally responsible for the bill. Our water charges have to be paid. This is usually by the person who lives in the property and uses the water. Unless your landlord has entered into an agreement with us, in writing, accepting responsibility for our charges, this means you.

Check your tenancy agreement. If your landlord is responsible for the bill and owing to his non-payment we start to take debt recovery action against you, or if your bill is for a previous tenant, please call us straight away. We can only help you if we know. Please call our customer service team on **0800 980 1391**.

If you do not think you are liable for the bill or you dispute the amount, you must tell us as soon as possible and we will investigate the matter. While investigating, the debt recovery process will be temporarily put on hold.

Responsibilities for multi occupants

Where there is more than one person occupying a property then any occupant can be asked by SWALEC to pay the whole bill.

Liability of charges for single meter supplying multi properties

Where two or more separately occupied properties are supplied through one meter then it is the responsibility of the various occupants to arrange for the bills and collection of payments from everyone concerned. SWALEC will endeavour to identify where the bills should be sent.

4. What happens if a bill is not paid?

If you have any problems paying your bill please call us on **0800 980 1391** as soon as possible so we may try to help. Our customer service team is available to help you from Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm and from 8am to 2pm on Saturdays.

We may be able to help you by arranging a more flexible payment plan or reviewing your regular payments to spread the cost of the bill. This will be at no extra cost to you.

If you do not pay your bill we will firstly send you a reminder. If the bill is still not settled then we may phone you to discuss payment. We may choose to use a national debt collection agency to help us collect payment. If you still do not contact us and make an agreement on how you will pay, the County Court will be asked to order you to pay.

For further details on help with paying your bills and what happens if the bill is not paid, please ask for a copy of our code of practice on debt recovery by calling our customer service team on **0800 980 1391**.

5. Pipework responsibility

Our pipes

We are responsible for the water main in the road and the part of the service pipe which runs from our main to a point at or near the boundary of your property. Normally, this is where your property borders on to that road.

We are responsible for keeping our meters and apparatus in good repair. However, you may have to pay the reasonable costs of repair if you or your contractor damages these fittings.

Our Meters

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:

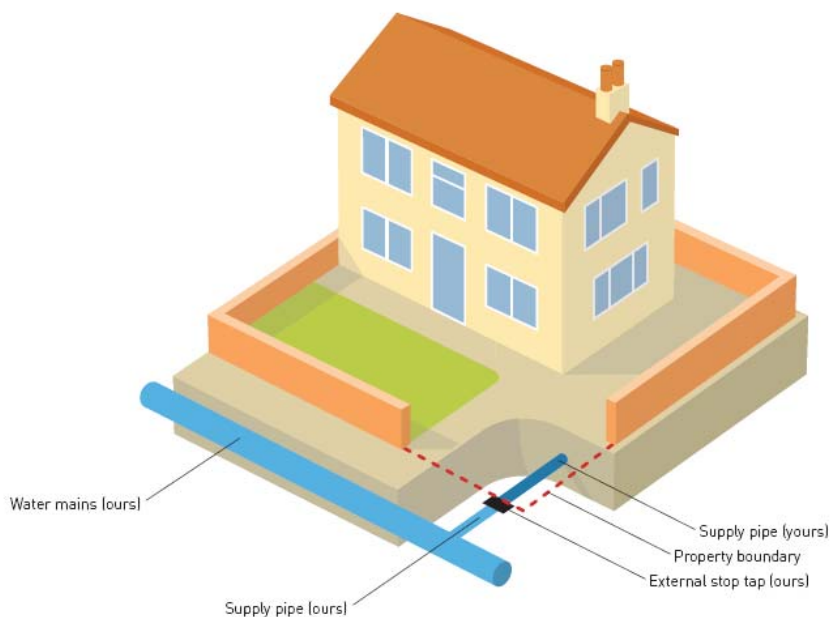
- Outside, adjacent to the property wall, preferably in the soft part of the garden
- Outside, at the boundary with the road or footpath
- Inside the property

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 are on our additional services register and are in receipt of certain benefits we may be able to relocate the meter free of charge. Please phone us on 0800 316 2190 to discuss this further.

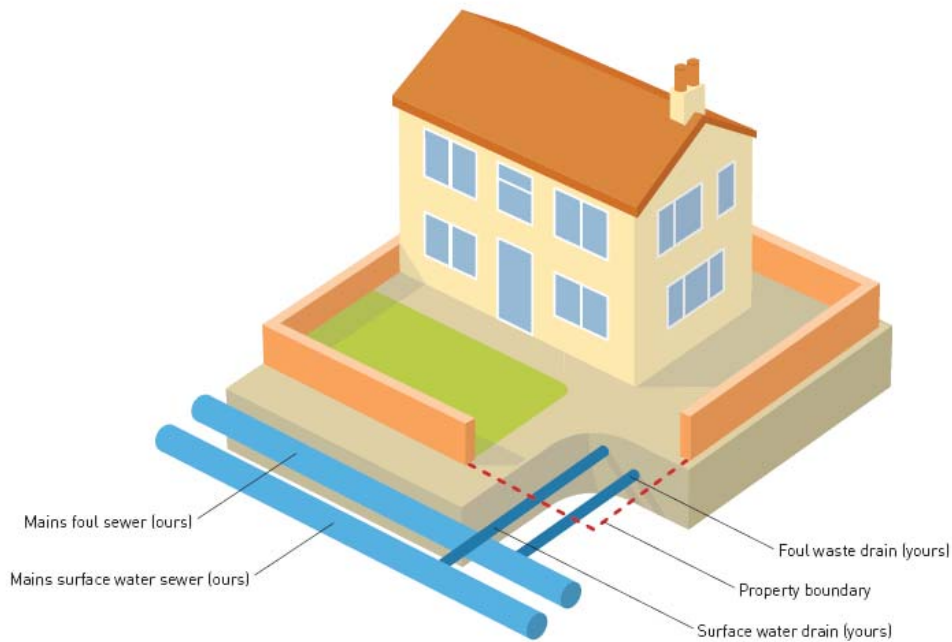
Your pipes

The rest of the pipework taking the water into the property is your responsibility or your landlord's. This is your supply pipe (see diagram below). It is your responsibility to maintain this pipe, repairing leaks when the pipe bursts – just as you would maintain the plumbing inside your property. It is also your responsibility if the supply pipe runs under other properties before reaching yours. The internal stop valve is also your responsibility. This is where you can turn off your water in an emergency or for maintenance.



Drains

A drain is usually a private pipe that serves one property. The drains that carry your household's wastewater are your responsibility to maintain. A drain will generally be found on your property. It may run under the public footway and highway and then up to the point where it connects with the public sewer. In some circumstances, the public sewer may be in your back or front garden. In this case, only the drains that connect to this sewer are your responsibility. In other cases, the public sewer may be some distance from your house.



Maps of our clean and wastewater pipes are available for inspection by members of the public at our customer service centres. Please contact 0800 316 2190 for details of sites where you can inspect maps of our pipes.

Leaks

SWALEC is responsible for finding and repairing any leaks on our pipework. Sometimes, during the course of our water main checks, we also find leaks on our customers' supply pipes. If your supply pipe is leaking, legally you are responsible for repairing it.

To help customers look after their own pipes we offer a free external leak detection service, and a free leak repair or pipe replacement scheme for our domestic customers. 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.

More information is available on our website at www.swalec.co.uk or if you contact us on 0800 316 2190.

We have legal powers to disconnect a customer's water supply where we believe that water is being wasted or misused or where there is a risk that problems with the customer's pipes could contaminate our water supply or damage our apparatus.

This is normally a last resort and we will, except in the case of some emergencies, give you notice of the action we need you to take to prevent damage to our apparatus, contamination of our water supply or further waste of water before we disconnect the supply.

If you do not act on this notice we may have to disconnect your supply. Where we do disconnect your supply we will, as soon as reasonably practicable tell you what you need to do before we can restore the supply.

A leak can sometimes be a danger to people or property; for example, through flooding or freezing. If we find such problems, we may cut off the supply until the leak is repaired.

As you have a meter, the longer you leave a leak running the more you may have to pay for the wasted water, however you may be eligible for a leakage allowance. We have a code of practice on leakage which sets out our policies on leakage. This leaflet also includes advice on how to prevent and detect leaks on your pipes. You can ask for a free copy of our code of practice by calling **0800 980 1391**.

Also, remember that if you spot a leak in the street, we need to know about it so that we can fix it. You can help by calling our emergency service team (available 24 hours) on 0800 316 2190 to report any leaks from our pipes and apparatus.

6. Water services

Our business is to supply treated water to our customers and to connect all new customers to a water supply. This section tells you what services we provide and explains your responsibilities. Information can also be found on our website at www.swalec.co.uk.

Water quality standards

The quality of water for household purposes is controlled by the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000 and all subsequent amendments which are set by the Secretary of State. They cover how the water should taste, look and smell, as well as other aspects of the quality of the water, such as chemical and mineral content.

We must supply water that at least meets the Regulations and, each year, we carry out tests to check the quality of the water we supply. Our performance is reported upon annually by the company and the Drinking Water Inspectorate, DWI, which regulates public water supplies in England and Wales.

When a sample is analysed and fails to meet requirements, it does not necessarily mean that the water is harmful to health or unfit to drink. If we are concerned about the quality of water we may issue either a Notice to Boil or Do Not Drink Notice which will be delivered directly to your home. Once we are satisfied that the water is safe to drink again, we will give you a notice letting you know.

Failures can arise for a variety of reasons - for example in individual properties plumbing materials and installations may cause a problem where the mains water is of good quality and neighbouring properties are unaffected.

If however we have supplied water which does not meet the standards then we can be prosecuted by the DWI.

A report on our testing is available on request by calling our customer service team on 0800 316 2190. Alternatively, please call us if you would like to make an appointment to view our water quality records, which are held at our Head Office at:

SWALEC
55 Vastern Road
Reading
RG1 8BU

If you are concerned about the quality or safety of your drinking water supply, or simply want to know more about your water supply, please contact us on 0800 316 2190, and we will be happy to help you.

Resolving problems

Occasionally we may ask our scientists to investigate further. If your concern is regarding illness or petrochemical contamination, our scientists will attempt to call you within one hour. To resolve the problem it may be necessary for us to inspect your plumbing system, or take water samples for testing. In such cases we will make a convenient appointment with you.

If we need to test the water we will take a sample for laboratory analysis. We will aim to send you a full written report within 10 working days, but if we find anything unusual with the sample we will telephone you to let you know the results as soon as they are available.

In the unlikely event that there is a possibility of your water being contaminated, we will take immediate action to rectify the problem. We will inform you immediately and tell you what precautions you should take.

Discoloured or cloudy water

Aerated water, white or cloudy water is where air has been trapped in the supply main. This generally happens after the main has been opened to carry out essential maintenance. Air gets trapped within the pipe and, under the force of the mains pressure, the large air pocket splits into very tiny air pockets. These look like white specs in the water and can often make water look milky. This is harmless and will normally clear within 24 hours. If you have any concerns, please call our customer service team on **0800 316 2190**.

Water quantity

We have a duty to give you a constant supply of water which is enough to meet your normal household needs – this is drinking, washing, cooking, central heating and sanitation.

Exceptional weather conditions may reduce the amount of water we have, so we may need to restrict the amount of water that you use. This may be by enforcing a hosepipe and sprinkler ban. Remember, during hosepipe and sprinkler bans you can still water your garden using watering cans and buckets. Doing all you can to be water efficient would help everyone.

We may also have to reduce water pressure in order to lessen the impact of bursts and leaks. We may need to restrict water supplies due to drought order restrictions on using water imposed under the Water Resources Act 1991 banning non essential use (e.g. in parks and sports grounds). This should not be necessary more often than 1 year in 50 on average. We will make a payment to household customers of **£35** for each day or part of a day that the supply of water for domestic purposes is interrupted or cut off as a result of emergency restrictions authorised by drought orders. For further details, please call our customer service team on **0800 980 1391**.

We also have a duty to promote efficient use of water. We encourage people to use water wisely and save water, using publicity and the media. There are easy ways to save water such as fixing a dripping tap which could waste 5,500 litres of water a year and turning the tap off while brushing your teeth. Over 6 litres a minute pour out of the average tap. A bath can use up to a massive 100 litres of water while a shower only uses about 33 litres.

Please contact us or visit our website for more ways we can help you save water.

Water pressure

The pressure at which we supply water should be enough to make sure water reaches the top storey of every building unless the building (for example, a block of flats) is so high that water will not flow to it by gravity from our reservoir, tank or tower.

In most cases, you will have an adequate water supply pressure. As a guide, if you have a suitable single service pipe, the first tap in your home should be able to fill a 4.5 litre (1 gallon) bucket in 30 seconds with all the other taps and appliances turned off.

Pressure and flow rates in your home can be affected by a number of things:

- the height of the property above the water main and its height compared with our reservoir
- the condition of your own pipes and fittings
- faulty, or partially closed, inside stop valves
- the number of properties supplied by the same pipe work
- peak water demand, with lots of people using water at the same time

If you think that your water pressure is too low, we will investigate free of charge. If we are responsible for the problem, we will tell you what we are going to do. If it is not our fault, we will offer advice as to what you can do to improve the situation. The pressure we deliver water to you is covered by our Guaranteed Standards Scheme, please see section 15 for details.

7. Sewerage and Treatment Services

We are required to provide and maintain a system of public sewers that takes the waste water from your private drains and sewers. This section tells you what services we provide and explains your responsibilities. Information can also be found on our website at www.swalec.co.uk.

Responsibility for drains and sewers

If you have a problem with your private drains and sewers – for example, to clear a blocked drain, you may need to get specialised help from a contractor. If you contact our customer service team on 0800 316 2190 we may be able to help you arrange for a reputable local contractor to help you. Please note that you may have to pay a call-out charge and any other charges for work that you may ask the contractor to do.

Types of sewers

There are various types of sewers:

- surface water sewers carry rainwater that runs off roofs, some roads and other hard surfaces
- foul sewers carry water that has been used for cooking and washing, and the waste from lavatories and trade premises to waste water treatment works
- combined sewers carry both types of waste water (foul and surface water) to treatment works

In most cases, our sewers are in roads or public open spaces. In certain circumstances, our sewers may run through private land. In this case, we have the right to enter private land to maintain and repair our sewers. Maps of our clean and wastewater pipes are available for inspection by members of the public at our customer service centres. Please contact 0800 316 2190 for details of sites where you can inspect maps of our pipes.

Blocked and collapsed sewers

Each year, many thousands of drains and sewers become blocked. This is mainly due to the incorrect disposal of household waste. Items like nappies, anti-bacteria wipes, sanitary products are flushed away instead of correctly disposing of them by wrapping them in a bag and putting them in a bin.

If one of our sewers is blocked or a pumping station breaks down and this disrupts our service or threatens to flood properties, we will send a team to the site as quickly as possible. We will try to start work to clear the blockage within 4 hours of receiving a call. We are not liable unless negligent.

Flooding from sewers

Fortunately, very few of our customers will ever experience sewer flooding. This may occur if sewers are blocked or in extreme weather conditions such as heavy rainstorms. We know that flooding is an unpleasant and distressing experience. We are committed to reducing the risk of sewer flooding and to offering help if flooding occurs.

If you experience sewer flooding then please call us on 0800 316 2190. Our emergency service team are available 365 days a year, 24 hours a day.

We treat any reported incidents of sewer flooding as a priority and will send a representative to the site as soon as possible after we have been notified of a situation. If requested we will

provide you with a written explanation of the flooding incident within 10 days. Although we do not accept liability for sewer flooding, we look at claims individually.

Flooding from sewers is covered by our Guaranteed Standards Scheme, for further details please see section 15 or call our customer service team.

The Consumer Council for Water also publish a leaflet on sewer flooding. If you would like a copy then please telephone the Council on 0845 039 2837.

8. Special Services

WaterSure tariff (for vulnerable customers who use large amounts of water)

We can help you with a reduced tariff if your household uses an unavoidably high amount of water due to family size or certain medical conditions. To qualify for this reduced rate, you must receive Council tax benefit, housing benefit, income support, income-based jobseeker's allowance, state pension credit, income-related employment and support allowance, child tax credit (unless you only receive the family element) or working tax credit, and either have:

- a large family (with at least three dependant children under the age of 19 and for whom child benefit is being received), or
- a member of your household who has certain medical conditions that require the use of significant amounts of extra water. These include desquamation (flaky skin loss); weeping skin disease; incontinence; abdominal stomas; Crohn's disease; ulcerative colitis; and kidney failure requiring home dialysis. Other medical conditions may also be eligible if your doctor agrees that they require significant use of extra water.

If you do qualify for the WaterSure tariff, you will pay no more than the average household bill for the local supply area. If you believe that you may qualify for this special rate, please call our customer service team on **0800 980 1391** who will help you with your application. We will ask you to complete the form with supporting documentation. SWALEC may contact the relevant bodies to confirm any questions we may have.

Each year eligible customers will need to re-confirm details to support that you still qualify for this special rate.

Other services we offer

We can help you if you find it difficult to read your bill and offer a range of special services. You can talk to us about the additional services that could help you if you call our Careline on 0800 980 1387.

Talking summary bills

If you are blind or have trouble seeing or reading, our talking summary bill service may help. One of our advisors will phone you, read a summary of your water bill to you and answer any questions you may have. Then we will post it to in the usual way.

Easy-to-read bills

If you have problems reading the normal print on your bill, we can send you a bill that is easier to read because the print is larger.

Help from others

If a friend or relative usually helps you when you get your water bill, we can send it to them direct. This makes it easier for you and for them to deal with the bill. If you would like a copy too, please make sure you ask us.

Braille bills

If you would like to receive your bills in Braille, we can arrange this for you. We can also send you other correspondence in Braille.

Textline

Phone textline on **0800 622 839** if you suffer from hearing loss or impaired speech and you are a text telephone user. The line is open between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 2pm on Saturdays.

Please do not phone textline unless you are using a text telephone to send typed messages.

Languages

If your first language is not English, please let us know when calling us. Please say in English which language you want to use and we will try to provide a translator. This may involve a short wait.

Password Scheme

We can arrange for a special and confidential password for you to protect you from bogus callers at your home.

For details on all our special services and to register for them, please call our customer service team on 0800 980 1387 and we will be happy to help.

9. What happens when you move property?

Please tell us at least 10 working days before you move out of a property so we can arrange to close your account. Please call our customer service team on **0800 980 1391**.

We need a meter reading on the day you move out. You may take the reading yourself and call us. Alternatively, if you are unable to read the meter yourself please call us with 5 days notice so we can arrange for a meter reader to call.

If you move without telling us, or tell us less than 10 working days beforehand, you may be billed for the water supply charges which are due to the next occupier.

We will send you a final bill or credit within five working days of receiving notification that you have vacated a property provided that a meter reading is taken on the day of the move.

If you are moving out and the property is going to remain vacant for a period of time please let us know as you may not have to pay charges from the date that the furniture is removed.

10. In case of emergency

We aim to deal with any emergency as quickly as possible and establish the cause of the problem.

Reporting an emergency

In the event of an emergency please call us on 0800 316 2190.

Our emergency service team are available 365 days a year, 24 hours a day.

Operational emergencies

If you need to switch off your water, the external stop valve is usually located at the front of the property and is normally within the public footpath. If this is not the case and you cannot find your external stop valve, please call us on 0800 316 2190 and we will arrange for an inspector to visit.

If you think your water supply has been disconnected please check with your neighbours to see if they are affected too. If you are the only household affected it may be an internal plumbing problem. If not, please call us on 0800 316 2190 and we will investigate.

Sewer flooding

If an incident occurs please report this immediately by calling us on 0800 316 2190. We will send an engineer to attend to the incident as soon as possible. In the meantime, you should avoid contact with sewage wherever possible.

If you think the sewer is blocked please call us on 0800 316 2190 and we will determine who is responsible for the sewer. If it is our responsibility we will send out an engineer to clear the blockage which will be free of charge. If it happens to be a private sewer we can arrange for an

engineer to attend which will be chargeable. Alternatively, you have the option of arranging for a private contractor to attend.

11. Interruptions to Supply

Planned Interruptions

We sometimes have to interrupt your water supply to mend leaks, connect new customers and make improvements. We will give you notice of planned interruptions and we guarantee to restore your water supply within the time we tell you. These activities are covered by our Guaranteed Standards Scheme. For full details of this, please visit our website at swalec.co.uk or call our customer service team on **0800 980 1391**. It is also summarised in section 15 below.

Unplanned Interruptions

If there is an unplanned interruption, for example when a water main bursts, we will put your water supply back on within 12 hours of becoming aware of the problem. Some of our larger mains can be more difficult to mend quickly. In the event that a major water main bursts we guarantee to restore your water within 48 hours. Where practical and reasonable, we will tell you when your supply will be back on as soon as we can set a time. In addition, where we can, we will try and inform you from where an alternative supply may be obtained.

Please see section 15 below for a summary of our Guaranteed Standards Scheme. For full details please visit our website at www.swalec.co.uk or call our customer service team on **0800 980 1391** and ask for a copy of our Guaranteed Standards Scheme.

12. Appointments

When we arrange an appointment we will tell you whether we will arrive in the morning or afternoon. Normally we will be able to arrange for a visit within 2 weeks of your call. Our morning appointments will be between 9am and 1pm while an afternoon appointment will be between 1pm and 5pm. If you request, we can provide you with a 2 hour time band for the visit.

Sometimes due to exceptional circumstances we will not be able to keep the appointment. If this happens we will give you at least 24 hours notice that the appointment has been cancelled. We will try to avoid having to cancel an appointment more than once.

Please see section 15 below for a summary of our Guaranteed Standards Scheme. For full details please visit our website at www.swalec.co.uk or call our customer service team on **0800 980 1391** and ask for a copy of our Guaranteed Standards Scheme

13. Getting in touch

If you have a question about your bill or our services then please call us on **0800 980 1391**. We are open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 2pm on Saturdays.

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.

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

14. 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 you think we have been going wrong so we can improve our service for the future.

If you do not pay for the services we provide, there are certain steps we will take to recover the money we are owed. We want to avoid having to take these steps. At any stage, you can contact us (or our agents if the account has been passed to them) and make and keep an agreement to pay that will avoid further debt recovery action.

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. 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 explaining why you are unhappy and we will respond within 10 working days from the date we receive your letter. If we do not respond to you in this time then we will make a payment to you under our Guaranteed Standards Scheme. For full details of this, please visit our website at swalec.co.uk or call our customer service team on **0800 980 1391**. It is also summarised in section 15 below.

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

Arbitration

Determination of disputes by Ofwat

We will always try and resolve a complaint with you as quickly as possible but sometimes this does not happen. In such circumstances you may refer your dispute to Ofwat. When a dispute is sent to Ofwat, their decision is final and binding on both parties. Disputes that may be sent to Ofwat can only be about certain subjects.

The following list summarises what those subjects are, as relevant to SWALEC customers:

- disconnection and reconnection charges
- separate service pipes for new or present supplies
- installation of water storage tanks to maintain pressure and supply in some special cases
- connecting to public sewers
- trade effluent
- power to close or restrict use of a public sewer
- altering your drainage system
- guaranteed standards of service payments

Ofwat can be contacted at:

Ofwat
Centre City Tower
7 Hill Street
Birmingham
B5 4UA
Telephone: 0121 625 1300

Determination of disputes by the Environment Agency (EA)

Under the Environment Act 1995, the EA can decide disputes when SSE Water Ltd has rejected requests for first time sewerage schemes. If the EA is called to make a determination, its decision is final and binding on both parties.

Determination of disputes by an independent arbitrator

Under the Water Industry Act 1991, certain disputes can be decided by an independent arbitrator. Examples include claims for compensation for damage or losses as a result of the use of street works powers and issues around the relocation of meters. Should a dispute of this nature arise, Ofwat will appoint an independent arbitrator.

15. Guaranteed Standards Scheme

All water companies are required by law to maintain certain minimum guaranteed standards. These standards are designed to ensure that you receive the service that you expect and details of the payments you are entitled to in the event that we fail to meet them.

SWALEC's Guaranteed Standards Scheme for water customers (GSS) document provides full terms and conditions for payments under the scheme. The following pages are intended to summarise the standards and circumstances in which you may be entitled to payment from SWALEC for our failure to meet these standards. The summary below gives the level of payments domestic customers are entitled to in the event of a service failure. Business customers are also entitled to payments and these are set out in SWALEC's full GSS document. Hopefully we will not fail to meet any of the standards, but if we do you can be sure that we will be working as hard as possible to satisfy your concerns, and put right any incidents that do inconvenience you.

As part of our commitment to customers and our confidence in the services we provide, the levels of payments we offer are among the highest in the industry.

There are certain exclusions included in the Guaranteed Standards Scheme where payments do not have to be made and accordingly the payments referred to below for any failure by us are subject to these. Different exclusions apply to different guarantees, but they include such things as failure to comply because of industrial action, severe weather conditions and drought. In the event of any conflict between this summary and the Guaranteed Standards Scheme document the Guaranteed Standards Scheme document will take precedence.

To obtain a copy of our full Guaranteed Standards Scheme Document please visit our website at www.swalec.co.uk or call our customer service team on **0800 980 1391**.

Making and Keeping Appointments

If we need to make an appointment to visit your premises, we will try to agree a suitable day for the visit and we will confirm the address, date and approximate time of the visit. You can choose whether a representative will arrive in the morning (9am–1pm) or afternoon (1pm–5pm) or, if you prefer, you can choose a 2-hour time slot for the visit.

We will automatically make a payment of **£50** to you within 10 working days if we fail to do so. If we fail to arrive in the agreed time period or fail to give you 24 hours notice of cancellation, we will automatically make a payment of **£50** to you within 10 working days.

Water Pressure

We have a commitment to maintain your water pressure at 7 metres static head at a company stop tap at the boundary of the property. If the pressure drops below this level in any period of 28 days on two occasions, for more than 1 hour, we will automatically make a payment of **£50** to you.

Notice of supply interruption

If we need to interrupt or cut off your water to carry out necessary works, we will give you reasonable notice in writing. This notice will include details of the earliest time after which your supply will be interrupted or cut off and also the time by which your supply will be restored.

If we need to interrupt or cut off your water for a period of more than 4 hours to carry out necessary planned works, we will give you the above written notice at least 48 hours in advance.

If we fail to do this we will automatically make a **£35** payment to you within 20 working days of the payment becoming due.

If we need to cut off your water to carry out emergency works, we will act as soon as possible to notify you that the supply has been interrupted or cut off, where an alternative supply can be obtained and let you know the time by which the supply will be restored. We will also provide you with the telephone number of an office from which you can obtain more information.

Restoration of Supply

We will also let you know when your supply will be restored. If we fail to restore your supply in accordance with our written notice, we will automatically make a payment of **£35** to you within 20 working days of the payment becoming due. We will also include a further payment of **£35** for every subsequent period of 24 hours that the interruption continues beyond the time we gave you in our original notice.

In the event of an unplanned interruption, for instance if there is a burst pipe, if we don't restore your supply within 48 hours if the burst is on a strategic main or within 12 hours for all other mains we will make an automatic payment of **£35** to you within 20 working days of the payment becoming due. We will also automatically make a payment of **£35** to you for every further 24 hours that the interruption continues.

Flooding from Sewers

In the highly unlikely event of effluent entering your building, we will automatically make a payment equivalent to your annual sewerage charge subject to a maximum of **£1000** and a minimum of **£150** for each incident.

If the effluent does not enter your building but does enter your land or property and you are materially affected by the incident, then we will make a payment equivalent to 50% of your annual sewerage charge subject to a maximum of **£500** and a minimum of **£75** for each

incident, where you claim the payment within 3 months of the effluent entering your land or property.

These payments will be made within 20 working days of the payment becoming due.

Complaints

If you make a complaint in writing about either your water supply or sewerage service we will reply within 10 working days with a substantive response.

If we fail to do this, we will automatically make a **£50** payment to you within 10 working days of the payment becoming due.

Account queries and requests about payment arrangements

If you write to us about the accuracy of your account we will reply to you within 10 working days. You will receive an automatic **£50** payment within 10 working days if we fail to do so.

You can request a change of payment arrangement in writing to us. If we cannot agree to your request and we do not respond to you within 5 working days, we will automatically make a **£50** payment to you within 10 working days of the payment becoming due.

Payments and claims

If we do not make a payment you are due under the standards for appointments, written complaints or account queries within 10 working days of it becoming due, a further payment of **£35** will be made automatically. In all other areas, payment will be made within 20 working days of it becoming due or a further payment of **£35** will be made automatically. If you feel you have suffered a service failure and we have not made an automatic payment (for example, we may not have been aware you were affected), please contact us.

We will normally make the payment by crediting your account, however you can request a direct payment which we will make provided certain conditions are met.

We hope you will never need to make a claim. However, if you do need to make a claim under our Guaranteed Standards Scheme you can do so by writing to SWALEC PO Box 360 Portsmouth PO6 2YJ or by calling us on **0800 980 1391**

If you feel we have acted unfairly by denying a payment under the Guaranteed Standards Scheme, you can ask the Consumer Council for Water to review the facts relating to your case and deal with the matter on your behalf. Details of how to contact the Consumer Council for Water are given in Section 14 above.

If we still fail to reach an agreement, you can ask Ofwat, the independent economic Regulator for the water industry, to consider your claim and make a determination. If you want to do this write to:

Ofwat
Centre City Tower
7 Hill Street
Birmingham
B5 4UA

Other service levels we offer

This section has set out our Guaranteed Standards. In addition to these, we have further levels of service that we aim to achieve on a voluntary basis covering areas such as water quality, billing errors and arrangements if you are moving house. These are set out in our “Promises to You” leaflet, which is available on our website at swalec.co.uk. You can also phone our customer service team on **0800 980 1391** to ask for a copy.

16. Other helpful information

The laws protecting you

Private sector companies have been providing all public water supply and waste water services in England and Wales since 1989. We must abide by laws that maintain and strengthen your legal rights. Independent regulators make sure that we meet our obligations under these laws. These regulators are:

Ofwat (as governed by the Water Services Regulation Authority)

One of Ofwat’s duties is to protect your interests as a customer. Ofwat has approved this code of practice and must make sure that we meet the conditions of our appointment. These conditions include:

- pricing policy for our services
- monitoring the levels of service we provide
- guidance about what information we must give you

The Consumer Council for Water

The Consumer Council for Water (CCWater) is a watchdog set up to represent customers of

water and sewerage companies in England and Wales and provides a strong national voice for consumers. They are an independent body.

Consumer Council for Water
1st Floor, Victoria Square House
Victoria Square
Birmingham B2 4AJ
Tel: 0845 039 2837
Fax: 0121 345 1001
Email: enquiries@ccwater.org.uk
Website: www.ccwater.org.uk

The Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

DEFRA sets national government policy for water and controls some very important areas of our work. In particular the Drinking Water Inspectorate sets the standards for the quality of drinking water, which includes the European Union's standards, and is responsible for making sure that we meet them.

The Environment Agency (EA)

The EA is responsible for matters relating to rivers, groundwater, flood defence, pollution control, fisheries and navigation. In addition, it regulates both the quality and the quantity of water we take from - and return to - the rivers, other inland waters and underground sources.

The Environment Agency
Kings Meadow House
Kings Meadow Road
Reading
RG1 8DQ
Telephone 0118 953 5000
Website: www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI)

The DWI is part of DEFRA. It checks that the drinking water we supply is safe and meets the water quality standards – these are reported against compliance with drinking water standards in England and Wales, which are based on European Union Directives.

The Drinking Water Inspectorate
55 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2EY
Telephone : 020 7270 3370
Website: www.dwi.gov.uk

Local Health Agencies

Local Authority Environmental Health Officers and the District Health Authorities monitor public health in the communities we serve; we keep them informed about water quality issues in their areas.

Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999

There are Water Regulations to help us safeguard the water supply from being contaminated or wasted. These include important rules about the set up and appliances attached to the main water supply. For example, you will need a 'non-return valve' to stop water flowing back out of many appliances, water softeners and outside taps.

You (or your landlord) are responsible for your water supply pipe work and making sure that your plumbing system is in good order. This means that you may need to know about the Regulations that govern plumbing installations. Your plumbing and appliances must meet the Regulations and be properly maintained. There are penalties if these Regulations are ignored or broken. For more information, visit DEFRA's website - www.defra.gov.uk.

Access to your property

Sometimes we need to gain access to private premises for a variety of reasons. For example, to investigate a leak, read the meter, test the quality of the water at the taps, check for faulty drainage connections or check that Regulations are being met.

A genuine caller will always carry an identity card and will automatically show it to you. Often a genuine caller will be wearing a uniform and have a car or van nearby displaying the company's sign or logo.

As part of our Password Scheme, we can arrange for a special and confidential password for you to protect you from bogus callers at your home.

If you are unsure, a genuine caller will always be happy to wait outside whilst you contact us on **0800 980 1391** to confirm who they are.

17. Other leaflets we produce

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

Code of Practice on Leakage

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 service team on **0800 980 1391**.