

Our leakage code of practice



About this leaflet

This leaflet explains our leakage code of practice for domestic properties which are used wholly or partly as a dwelling.

It explains what we can help you with, and what we can't, if you're unlucky enough to experience a pipe leak.

We also have another leaflet, 'How to check your water usage and spot leaks', which contains lots more detail about how to find leaks using your own detective work. It's available at unitedutilities.com/leaflets.

The causes of leaks

Leaks can occur on the pipework inside your home or on the outside pipe beneath your garden, driveway or path. This is known as your supply pipe.

Common causes of leakage include:

- Gaps where sections of pipe join – through which water can escape
- Deterioration of the pipe material, or corrosion caused by water or the soil surrounding the pipe
- Pipes freezing during cold weather, or being damaged by soil subsidence during long dry periods
- Damage caused by traffic vibrations
- Faulty fixtures or fittings on internal pipework.

Tell-tale signs of a leak include unusually high water meter readings, a wet patch in the garden or driveway, poor water pressure, and noises in your inside pipes when no taps or appliances are being used.

Checking for leaks, if you have a water meter

If you've got a water meter, you can carry out a simple test, to see if you really do have a leak:

- Turn off all taps and appliances which use water.
- Wait 30 minutes, then take a meter reading (write down the red digits, as well as the black ones).
- Don't use any water for at least one hour, longer if possible (ideally overnight if you can) and then take another meter reading.

- Compare the two readings. Have they changed? Could you see the red digits on your meter turning even while the water was off? If so, you could have a leak.

To find out more about testing your meter please refer to our 'Testing your household water meter' leaflet. You can download this from our website at unitedutilities.com/leaflets or by calling our automated leaflet request line on **0800 980 6050**.

Our private leak repair scheme

Legally, your outside supply pipe is your responsibility to repair – but we like to help out where we can.

We currently offer a private leak repair scheme, which means that in certain cases, we may be able to repair a leak on your supply pipe free of charge.

We offer this service in the interests of saving water, and saving you a major headache!

The scheme is only for domestic properties, not for businesses. It works like this:

- We aim to investigate and repair leaks on a supply pipe within ten days. If the leak is an emergency (for example, it's causing damage to your property) we'd advise you to call a plumber in the first instance – in case we can't respond immediately. We'd recommend that you use a member of the Water Industry Approved Plumber Scheme. See wras.co.uk/wiaps for more details
- **If your supply pipe runs under your house, conservatory or other permanent structure, we won't be able to do the repair.** You will need a private plumber or builder in these circumstances
- We may have to do some digging in your driveway, yard or garden – so please be prepared for some disruption. We'll provide temporary reinstatement after a repair, and leave everything neat and tidy, but it's down to you to organise any permanent reinstatement (e.g. laying new tarmac or paving slabs).

To find out more about our private leak repair scheme, or to arrange an appointment with our engineers, please call us on **0345 672 3723**.

For further information



Water supply enquiries
0345 672 3723

Billing enquiries
If you don't have a meter:
0345 672 2888
If you have a meter:
0345 672 2999

Opening hours: 8am-8pm
Mon to Fri; 8am-4pm Sat.

If you have hearing or speech difficulties and use a textphone, please dial 18001 followed by the number you require.

Private leak repair scheme
0345 672 3723



United Utilities
PO Box 50
Warrington
WA55 1AQ

Spotted a leak?

We are committed to tackling leaks on our network (i.e. the public water mains under the roads and pavements), in order to prevent water wastage, and to ensure there is enough water available, whatever the weather. We have to meet strict leakage targets set by the water regulator, Ofwat.

If you spot a leak in the road or pavement, please do let us know, by calling our freephone 24 hour Leakline on **0800 33 00 33**.

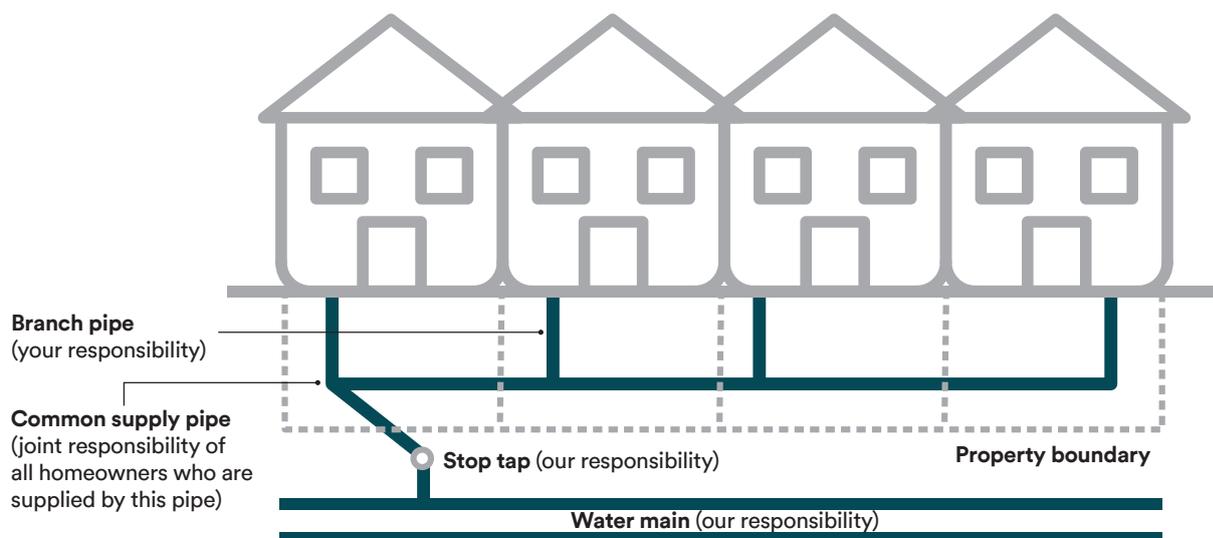
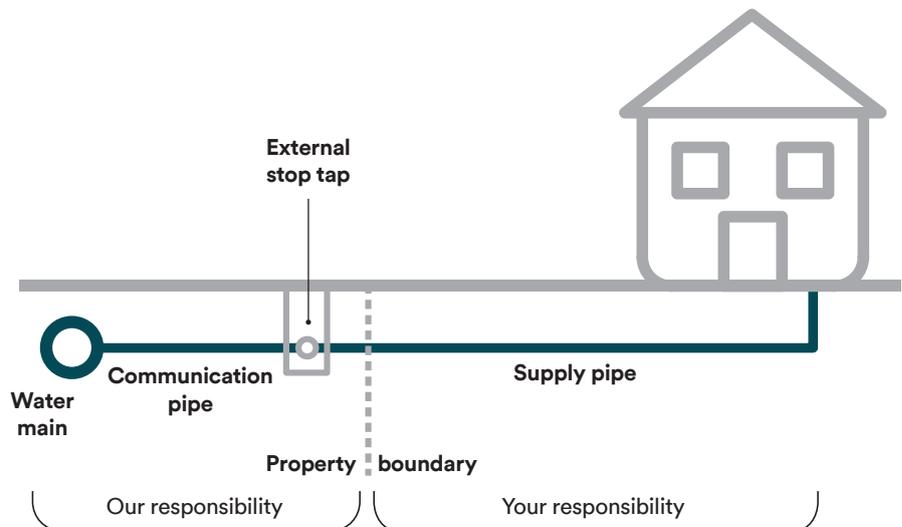
Single supply pipes

If you have a leak on the pipework inside your home, it's down to you to fix it, by calling out a private plumber.

A leak on your outside supply pipe is also your responsibility - although in some cases we may be able to help with the repair of this pipe under our private leak repair scheme (see page 1).

If the supply pipe runs through a neighbouring property, it's up to your neighbour to provide access to complete the repair – even if the neighbour's property is not supplied by the pipe. The repair must be completed at your cost.

If the leak is on a section of supply pipe that has been obstructed in contravention of fittings regulations - the Water Supply (Water Fitting) Regulations 1999 to be precise - then the property owner must remove any obstacles to get the repair done.



Shared pipes: who's responsible?

It's not unusual for several neighbours to share a water supply pipe, rather than each having one of their own. This is often the case with older terraces.

As the diagram shows, the most common scenario is for a shared supply pipe (known as the 'common supply pipe') to run in front of several properties, with shorter, individually owned 'branch' pipes connecting separately to each property.

If the shared pipe springs a leak, it can affect water pressure for all homes on the row – so it's in everyone's interests to get it fixed.

The responsibilities are divided up like this:

- If the leak is on the 'common supply pipe', all neighbours who rely on the pipe for their supply would share the repair costs equally. Each neighbour would also be responsible for providing access to enable the repair to be completed
- If the leak is found to be on the branch pipe to an individual property, the owner of that property would have to pay for the repair in full, although in some cases we may be able to help with the repair of this pipe under our private leak repair scheme (see page 1)
- If the leak is on a section of supply pipe that has been obstructed (for example, by an extension) in contravention of the Water Supply (Water Fitting) Regulations 1999, then the property owner must remove any obstacles to get the repair done.

If we find a leak when fitting an external water meter

If we find a leak on your outside pipework while fitting an external water meter and it can be repaired without any extra digging, we will repair it free of charge.

If we can't repair the leak there and then, you may wish to check your home insurance policy to see if leaks on your water supply pipe are covered. If not, in some cases we may be able to repair this pipe under our private leak repair scheme (see page 1).

If we suspect you have a leak somewhere else, such as on your internal pipework, we will tell you, so you can arrange for a plumber to investigate and fix any leaks.

The location of your water meter

When it comes to fitting a new water meter, there are three possible locations:

- Inside the house, usually under the kitchen sink
- In a meter box, mounted on the outside wall of your home
- In the street, close to the boundary of your property.

We will decide the most appropriate location. In new properties, we prefer meters to be fitted inside, or in a wall mounted box. For existing properties, a wall mounted box is not a practical option, due to the significant structural and plumbing alterations needed.

You can request an alternative location for your meter – but may have to cover the costs involved.

For more information, please see unitedutilities.com/leaflets

Preventing water wastage

In some circumstances, our engineers won't be able to repair your outside supply pipe.

As this repair service is a voluntary one (we do it in the interests of saving water, and being helpful!) we can't meet all challenges, such as digging beneath buildings.

If we can't do the fix, it will be down to you to arrange for a private plumber or builder to do the work within 14 days.

If the leak is not repaired within two weeks, we have a legal duty (under Sections 73-75 of the Water Industry Act 1991) to find a contractor who can do the work, and charge you back all reasonable costs. We even have the right, in some circumstances, to turn off the water supply if the leak is not repaired. This is in the interests of saving water, and preventing underground damage.

Bill adjustments after a leak

If you have a water meter, a leak can cause your meter reading to shoot up. You are entitled to claim an adjustment in your measured water and sewerage charges once the leak has been repaired.

To apply, please call us on **0345 672 2999** or fill in a claim form, available at unitedutilities.com/leaflets. Please get the form to us within 12 months after your pipe has been repaired.

It works like this:

- If you have a water meter and the leak was on your outside supply pipe, or the pipework inside your home you can claim an adjustment against your measured water and/or sewerage charges
(Note: we will only make one adjustment for an internal leak and one adjustment for an external leak per customer per property).

- Once the leak has been repaired, we'll work out the amount of wasted water, and deduct the cost from your subsequent bills
- We base your adjustment on previous water meter readings, or, if these aren't available, the typical water use of a property similar to yours. We then check our sums against your actual water usage after the leak has been fixed
- We can often make an adjustment on the sewerage part of your bill too. That's because sewerage charges are partly based on your water usage
- If you receive your sewerage services from another supplier, we will automatically apply the allowance on their behalf.
- If you are repairing the supply pipe yourself (i.e. our engineers are not doing the work) the work needs to be done within two weeks of discovering the leak, in order to qualify for an adjustment
- While your claim is being processed, you'll need to continue paying your water bill – but we would expect these payments to be based on your normal usage, not the artificially high consumption caused by the leak
- Unfortunately, we can't make an adjustment if the leak was caused by negligence on your part or by faulty fixtures or fittings (such as faulty cistern overflows); or if the leak was not reported to us at the time. If the leak was on the non-domestic part of the supply then you also would not qualify for an allowance
- If you have further leaks on your supply pipe, and can prove that the lost water has leaked into a watercourse or similar, and not into the public sewers, we may be able to reduce your sewerage charges more than once.

Room for improvement?

We do everything we can to resolve customer issues quickly and courteously. If, however, you are unhappy with the way we have dealt with an enquiry, you can write to us at **United Utilities, PO Box 453, Warrington, WA55 1SE**, or you can view our complaints procedure at unitedutilities.com/leaflets

You can also contact the Consumer Council for Water - the independent water watchdog which represents the interests of water customers.

Tel: 0300 034 2222
Write to: Consumer Council for Water
First Floor
Victoria Square House
Victoria Square
Birmingham
B2 4AJ

And finally, a quick recap

- To arrange for one of our engineers to visit your home to investigate a suspected leak on your outside supply pipe, please call us on **0345 672 3723**. Remember, if it's a real emergency, it may be quicker to call a plumber out in the first instance
- To apply for a bill allowance, if you've had a leak on your supply pipe, call **0345 672 3723**, or visit unitedutilities.com/bursthme for details about our household leak allowance. PLEASE NOTE: this scheme only applies if you have a water meter
- To find out more about how to check your water usage and spot leaks, visit our website, or order a leaflet (see panel on the back page).

This leaflet is one in a series of publications containing useful information for our customers. Others that may be of interest to you are:

- **How to check your water usage and spot leaks**
- **Private leak repair scheme**
- **Burst allowance claim form**
- **A simple guide to pipes, drains and sewers**
- **A guide to paying your water bill**
- **A simple guide to your water meter**
- **Our guide to Priority Services**
- **A guide to using water wisely**
- **WaterSure application pack**
- **Our complaints procedure**
- **Replacing lead and common supply pipes**
- **Our standards of service**
- **Water meter application pack**
- **Testing your household water meter**

You can download any of our leaflets from our website:
unitedutilities.com/leaflets.



About us

United Utilities is the North West's water company. We keep the taps flowing and toilets flushing for seven million customers every day. From Crewe to Carlisle, we work hard behind the scenes to help your life flow smoothly.

United Utilities Water Limited, Haweswater House, Lingley Mere Business Park, Lingley Green Avenue, Warrington WA5 3LP.
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