Leakage code of practice

This code applies to domestic metered customers only although non-metered customers also qualify for help with supply pipe leaks as explained below. For any enquiries please call: **0845 782 3333.**

OUR COMMITMENT TO REDUCING LEAKAGE

Each year Three Valleys detects and repairs thousands of leaks on 14,000 kilometres of mains pipelines. By working in close partnership with our customers in identifying leaks, we protect the environment.

We are committed to repairing our burst pipes without delay and to repairing most other leaks within 2 days.

We also promote water efficiency in the home and can supply useful information on how to carry out a water audit as well as tips for conservation in the garden. Please contact us for further details or visit, www.3valleys.co.uk.

PAYING BY VOLUME

If you have a water meter installed, you pay for the volume (quantity) of water you use. This is measured by a meter which has been installed on the supply pipe. Its major advantage is that you can control your usage and water bill.

LOCATING THE METER

You probably already know where your meter is located. Under Government regulations, we can determine the location of the meter. The most common positions are: -

- externally, in an underground meter pit box, close to the property boundary either in the footpath (our preferred location) or in your garden**.** The meter is connected to the supply pipe at the bottom of the box. You need to lift the small cover of the box and remove the polystyrene cover to see the meter face, which may also be covered by a plastic lid.

  Please note that water in the box does not necessarily mean that there is a leak as rainwater or water from the soil can also enter the box.

- Internally, close to your stopcock

If you ask us to move the meter to a different location we will consider your request. We may charge you to move the meter.

If in doubt, you can confirm that you have located the correct meter by checking that the meter serial number is the same as the serial number on your water bill. If you cannot find your meter please contact us for its location. The meter and associated fittings are the responsibility of Three Valleys Water.

Further information on metering issues can be found on our web site and in our meter packs which are available on request.

YOUR RESPONSIBLITITY FOR DETECTING LEAKAGE AND HIGH WATER USE

Supply pipe leaks

We have a detailed customer information leaflet covering supply pipe leaks. The following is a brief summary of the assistance we offer but we recommend that you request a copy of the leaflet for full details.

In most cases, the pipework on your property running from the stopcock in the pavement to your internal stopcock, known as the supply pipe, is your responsibility and although we have no legal obligation to maintain it we will do the following:

- If we think you have a leak on your supply pipe, we will visit your home to make an initial inspection which is free of charge. We may be able to advise you on the location and route of your pipe but we cannot guarantee to do so.

- If a leak is confirmed we will give you a written report of our findings and we will set out the next steps.

- Where the pipe is likely to be in good condition and we believe there is a good chance of locating and making a repair (we will not dig under any structure), we will make a single excavation to try and find the leak and then repair it. We will not make multiple repairs except as an emergency patch. This service is free of charge but this is at our discretion and is subject to terms and conditions available on request. If we do this and if the pipe is confirmed to be in good condition, you will qualify for a second free repair, subject to the same conditions as above.

- If we cannot offer a free repair, or if you choose to replace the pipe instead of repair it, we will contribute towards a replacement. This will be explained in the written report that we give you.

In all cases where we excavate we will refill the hole and make it safe but we will not reinstate to match the existing finish.

If you think you have a leak and we are doubtful, we may ask you to carry out some checks first before we visit.

If you need to make repairs to, or replace your supply pipe, you may need to employ the services of a suitably qualified plumber. You may wish to contact the Institute of Plumbing, telephone 01708 472791 or visit their web site, www.plumbers.org.uk. We can supply a list of contractors who have suitable experience but this should not be seen as a recommendation to use them. We suggest that you obtain more than one quotation before employing a plumber.

Leaks and high water use other than from the supply pipe

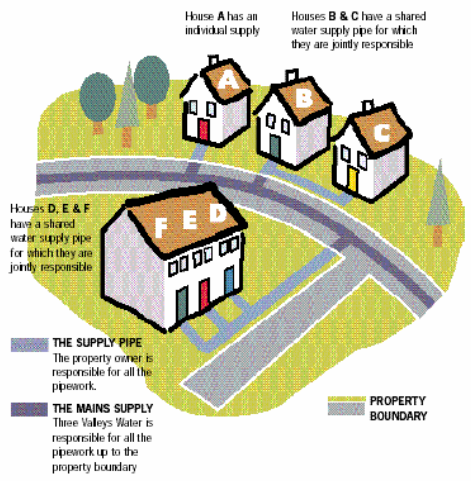
If you have an internal leak it is your responsibility to repair. We cannot provide assistance

If you think that your consumption of water is greater than it should be we can provide guidance to help you understand why this may be so. We will not normally carry out investigations inside your home although we do offer a chargeable service to install electronic logging equipment and to provide you with a report detailing when water was used.

PREVENTING WASTAGE OF WATER

We also have the right to insist that water is not wasted in other situations, for example from a leaking overflow pipe. In certain cases we have the right to issue a formal "Waste Notice" giving 21 days for the repair work to be carried out and we also have the right to repair and charge for our work if our advice notices are not acted upon. In extreme cases we may need to turn off the water supply until the leak is mended.

The sketch below outlines who is responsible for each section of pipework.



LEAKAGE CHECKS WHEN A METER IS INSTALLED

We know from experience that a substantial amount of water escapes from unidentified leaks in our customers' pipework. When a meter is installed we will check to assess whether there are any significant leaks in the pipework between the meter and the customers' tap. If a leak is found which can be repaired without additional excavation we will carry out the work free of charge and prior to the installation. If a leak is found on the supply pipe which will require further excavation we will not undertake this work but we will advise you what to do next. If you do not carry out works as advised and within the time limits notified to you, we are entitled to charge you for the water that is subsequently lost.

LEAKAGE AND HIGH USE AFTER THE METER IS INSTALLED

We aim to read your meter at least once a year. Unusually high readings may indicate the presence of a leak. If a leak is found on your supply pipe, we will make an allowance against your bill on one occasion only, for the water lost, subject to the conditions listed below. We can also explain the advantages of claiming lost water under your home insurance where appropriate.

Although it is highly unlikely that a water meter will record consumption inaccurately you may still request an accuracy test for your meter. You should request a meter test application form, either by telephone or in writing, but you should be aware that a charge would be made if the meter proves to be recording within the prescribed limits of accuracy.

HOW TO CHECK FOR LEAKAGE

The best way to find a leak is to use your eyes and ears. There are a number of simple checks you can make:

- Do you have a damp patch in the garden or driveway during dry weather?
- Is one particular patch of the lawn always green no matter how dry the weather has been?
- Can you hear water running down a drain when no water is being used in your property?
- Can you hear water hissing or the sound of running water (rather like when your tank or WC cistern is filling), when there is no water being used in the house?
- If you have a meter, make sure that no water is being used in the property and that all taps are turned off, then simply look at the meter for a couple of minutes. None of the dials should move. If they do then there may be a leak on the supply pipe. (However, please make sure that any tanks in the loft and elsewhere are not filling while you are checking).

If you think there is a leak on the pipe(s) supplying your property please contact us using the details given below (see How to report a leak) and we will provide further guidance.

How to read your meter

We do recommend that where possible you read your meter regularly, at monthly intervals, and it is useful to keep a record of these readings. This will alert you if your consumption increases unexpectedly.

To read your meter you will first need to locate it as explained above.

Although water meters can vary in size and shape, reading a meter is easy. You simply need to record the number of cubic metres registered on the meter.

The white numbers on black show cubic metres. The white numbers on red show litres (these can be ignored when you read the meter). Your account is based on the number of whole cubic metres. One of the red dials on the meter measures tenths of a litre and will spin round rapidly when water is being used.

ALLOWANCES MADE FOR LEAKAGE

All allowances must be claimed in writing using the appropriate form which is available on request or from our website. If approved you will receive a revised bill within a few weeks.

To qualify for an allowance the leak must be repaired within the time allowed on any "Waste Notice" issued and in all other cases within one month. The claim for an allowance must be made within three months of the repair.

Where a customer moves into a property that has been the subject of a previous allowance, a further allowance will be granted except where the former occupier was advised to replace the supply pipe and failed to do so.

An allowance will normally only be made for leakage from your supply pipe on one occasion. We do not usually make allowances for leaks from pipework or fittings beyond your internal stopcock, except where in our opinion, you could not reasonably have known about it.

We may grant a second leak allowance but this is entirely at our discretion. No allowance will be made if a leak has been caused by

Leakage code of practice

negligence by you or your agents or where you knew, or should have known, there was wastage of water or a leak and failed to repair it.

Where we agree to make an allowance, your charges will be re-assessed on the basis of past normal consumption. Where there is no record of previous consumption, the adjustment will be based on readings taken after repair or typical usage for a household of a similar type to your own.

The adjustment will only apply for the period of abnormal use. The period of the adjustment will not exceed twelve months.

ADJUSTMENT FOR CHARGES (SEWERAGE)

When we make an adjustment to the metered charges for water supply, a similar adjustment will be made to the measured sewerage charges if appropriate. As we act as a billing agent for Thames Water and Anglian Water, the adjustment (if applicable) will be applied automatically to your account.

HOW TO REPORT A LEAK

If you would like to report details of a leak please contact us via the following leakspotter line :

Telephone Free-phone 0800 376 5325 (24 hours)
Email:call.centre@3valleys.co.uk

Complaints

Three Valleys has a detailed complaints system.

If you are already in contact with us, you should continue to deal with the office concerned. However, if you are dissatisfied in any way with our services, please contact Customer Services by letter or telephone and we will investigate the matter promptly.

Customer Services
Three Valleys Water
PO Box 48, Bishops Rise
Hatfield
Hertfordshire AL10 9HL

Tel: 0845 782 3333
Email: mybill@3valleys.co.uk

Hearing difficulties? Contact us via Minicom on 01707 277149
Website: www.3valleys.co.uk

Other codes of practice

We have two other codes that you can request:

- Payment problems which provides guidance for those having problems paying their bill.
- General code which sets out our policies for a range of services

Consumer Council for Water (CCWater)

CCWater represents water consumers and is a statutory body reporting to the department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Customers of Three Valleys Water are represented by the London and South East Region of CCWater. They will only deal with complaints where the water company has been given an opportunity to resolve the complaint in the first instance. They can be contacted as follows:

Consumer Council for Water – London and South East region, High Holborn House, 52-54 High Holborn, London WC1V 6RL

Tel: 08457 581658
Email: thames@ccwater.org.uk
www.ccwater.org.uk