

# Leakage Code of Practice

## Domestic Customers



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The advice in this Leakage Code of Practice is important and has been approved by the Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat) and is applicable to domestic customers. For those domestic customers occupying a mixed-use premise, without a sub meter, leakage allowances will be calculated based on the average consumption of the type of property. As well as providing domestic customers with useful advice, this leaflet also explains what Bristol Water offers to help minimise the waste of water.

Water is a precious resource and it is in all our interests to ensure that we use it wisely. We are continually working to reduce the level of leakage from our supply network to a minimum.

However, some of the water lost comes from customers' own pipework, and if customers have a leak and they are metered, they may be paying for water they haven't used. Fixing leaks has other benefits; water leaking from pipes can damage roads and the foundations of buildings, so it's in everyone's interest to prevent and repair leaks quickly. Efficient use of water also helps protect the environment and keeps prices down.

If we find a leak on our network of pipes, or a customer reports a leak to us, we will ensure that the leak is repaired within 10 working days (unless we have to give extended notice to, or are directed by the local Highway Authority or third parties). If we fail to undertake a repair on a leak notified to us within 10 working days (excluding those instances where the local Highway Authority or third parties expect or direct us to give extended notice), under the Bristol Water Bond compensation scheme we will make a payment to the first person who reported the leak.

We also have a [Freephone Leakline 0800 801011](tel:0800801011) (available at all times) so that customers can tell us if they have spotted a leak.



## ■ What causes pipes to leak?

The action of frost, water logging, dry spells and the weight of traffic can cause small ground movements affecting the pipework and the types and ages of pipework can also be affected by the nature of the ground that they are laid in. With over 6,700 kilometres of water mains in the Bristol Water area, it is inevitable that leaks will occur and this is particularly the case where sections of pipe join or where customer pipes join ours.

Since the pipes are underground, only the worst leaks may show as water gushing out of the ground whereas smaller leaks are often difficult to find.



## ■ How to spot a leak

Customers are recommended to regularly check that their pipework is in good condition as this helps identify any leakage early. Leaks can be spotted in various ways:

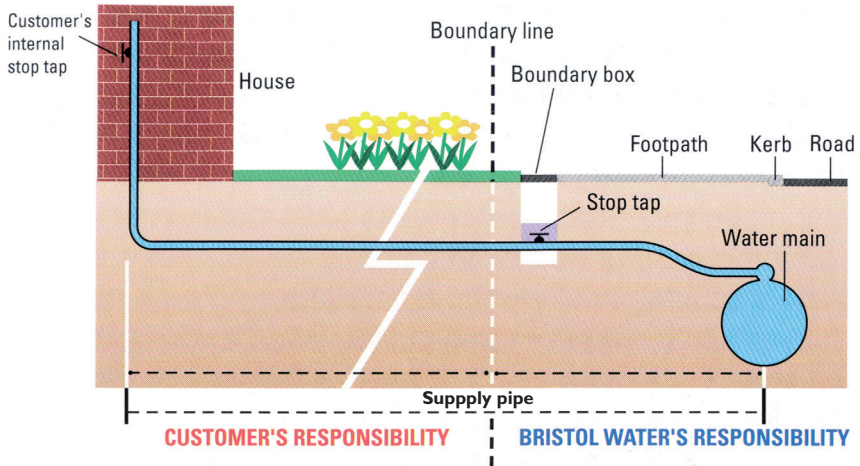
- Sudden loss of water pressure/flow
- In the worst cases, water gushes from the ground
- In dry weather there may be damp patches on the ground or lush plants where you don't expect to see them
- Your own plumbing may make a constant noise when no-one is using any water
- If you are a metered customer and you find that your water bill is much higher than you were expecting
- Your meter is registering flow when no taps/appliances are in use

We recommend customers make monthly checks on their meter readings to help spot leaks. If your reading rises for no apparent reason, you may have a leak on your supply.

If customers think they have a leak we offer up to half an hour free leakage detection advice on each occasion a leak is suspected. A list of Water Industry Approved Contractors will be provided to the customer so that additional leakage detection advice and repair can be arranged.



## ■ Typical responsibility of ownership



*This illustration shows a typical plan of pipe ownership and responsibilities.  
For further information relating to supply pipe ownership, telephone 0345 702 3797  
(8.00am - 6.00pm, Monday to Friday).*

## ■ Responsibilities for leaks

We are responsible for fixing leaks on our own pipework. Customers are generally responsible for all the supply pipe inside the boundary of their property and in private land: this is from where the pipe enters private land, usually at the stop tap in the boundary. However in certain circumstances customers' responsibility may extend to that of the supply pipe in a street.

This means that, if there is a leak from the customer's pipework, it is their responsibility to have the pipe repaired or replaced.



## ■ LeakStop and how Bristol Water can help

We operate a scheme known as 'LeakStop' which works in conjunction with the issuing of leakage notices. It may allow the registered bill payer to have one free and one further subsidised fixed repair at their property on their external underground pipework up to the external wall of the house subject to certain conditions (terms and conditions relating to LeakStop can be found at the back of this leaflet). The free element of the LeakStop scheme does not apply to leaks inside or under properties or to tap re-washing. It is advisable for customers to call in a plumber to repair leaks in the home.

Under our LeakStop scheme, we may provide a free leak repair for the first leak to stop wastage, until the customer decides to have the pipe replaced. LeakStop repairs are guaranteed for 12 months but if a further leak appears on another section of the supply pipe, then this may be repaired at the subsidised LeakStop rate which is published in Bristol Water's Charges Scheme and on our website – [www.bristolwater.co.uk](http://www.bristolwater.co.uk).

Permanent reinstatement will be carried out but we will not be responsible for exceptional costs necessary to reinstate special surfaces (landscaping, brick paving, flagstones and the like). To take advantage of the free or subsidised repair, customers must reply within 5 working days of the 'leakage notice' being issued to the customer by a Bristol Water representative.

## ■ What happens if there is a leak

As you would expect, we routinely check and repair our pipework system and often detect leaks on customers' pipes. If we find a leak on a customer's pipe or are notified of a leak on private pipework, we will issue a 'leakage notice' under the Water Industry Act 1991. This notice places the responsibility on the customer to have the leak repaired within 14 calendar days. In extreme cases where the leak is causing or likely to cause harm to people or damage property, or there is risk of contamination, we have the legal powers to issue a 7 calendar day 'leakage notice' or disconnect the supply until the leak is repaired. We recheck after 14 calendar days and if the leak is not repaired we will issue a more formal notice for the leak to be repaired. If within a further 7 calendar days the pipe has still not been repaired we have the right to repair the leak ourselves and charge the customer all the costs involved.

When a 'leakage notice' is issued, customers can telephone **0800 281402** (8.00am – 4.00pm, Monday to Friday) for help and advice.





If customers decide not to take advantage of our LeakStop scheme, we will provide up to half an hour free leak detection advice when the 'leakage notice' is issued. Customers will also be given a list of Water Industry Approved Contractors so that additional leakage detection advice and repair can be arranged.

If customers have not received a 'leakage notice', but have a leak on their underground water supply pipe, they may still be entitled to a free repair, or a subsidised repair on a subsequent leak and should contact us on **0345 702 3797** (8.00am - 6.00pm, Monday to Friday) if they want us to carry out up to half an hour of free leakage detection advice.

If you have any queries about your responsibility for pipework or LeakStop and the terms and conditions relating to the scheme, call the following Freephone number - **0800 281402** (8.00am - 4.00pm, Monday to Friday).



## ■ Leakage on metered supplies

Water meters measure the amount of water being supplied to customers properties. The position of the meter is determined by Government Regulations and there are three normal meter positions:

- external in the garden within one metre of the property boundary (our preferred location)
- external in the footpath
- internal

Customers can sometimes choose a different location to our preferred location, but this may involve additional costs for which the customer will be responsible. The surveyor will discuss the options with the customer and let the customer know what the additional costs will be. For registered disabled or infirm customers we can offer alternative meter positions free of charge.

When a meter is fitted we conduct a visual check of the meter and if we find a leak we will tell the customer. If we can repair the leak without excavating we will do so, otherwise we may have to issue a leakage notice. If the leak is on the external supply pipe customers may qualify for a free LeakStop repair. If LeakStop is not applicable, the customer will have to arrange for the repair to be made at their own expense. A list of Water Industry Approved Contractors will be provided to the customer so they can obtain quotes to carry out the necessary repair.

## ■ Leakage Allowance for Metered Domestic Customers

If your metered bill is higher than normal, it could be due to a leak on the water supply pipe or fittings. In these situations we will make an allowance subject to the following points:

- We may make allowances for leakage to household customers who pay for water by meter subject to the customer repairing the leak within 14 calendar days of first identifying it.
- We will give a 100% allowance for water lost from your supply pipe on the first occasion and 50% allowance for water lost from the supply pipe on the second occasion whilst you live at the property. No allowance will be made for subsequent leaks.
- For customers living in a mixed use property, using less than 200 cu.m. p.a. you may claim an allowance of 100% of consumption above normal usage lost from your supply pipe in the first instance and 50% allowance for water lost from your supply pipe on the second occasion whilst living at the property. No allowance will be made for subsequent leaks.
- For customers living in a mixed use property, using between 201 – 15,000 cu.m. p.a. you may claim an allowance of 50% of consumption above normal usage lost from your supply pipe in the first instance, whilst living at the property. No allowance will be made for subsequent leaks.
- An allowance will only be made once the repair has been satisfactorily carried out. This repair may be subject to inspection by ourselves.
- If we agree to reduce your bill, we will calculate the allowance based on your last two billing periods. We may adjust the bill again if we find that you use a lot more or a lot less water when we next read the meter. If you have no consumption history, we will calculate the allowance based on the consumption of a similar property type. However, as soon as the actual average consumption is known the allowance will be adjusted accordingly.
- No allowance will be granted where a leak has been caused through negligence by you or by anyone acting on your behalf.
- No allowance will be made due to water loss through faulty equipment and fittings.
- It is the customer's responsibility to repair the leak quickly and ensure the supply pipe is 'fit for purpose'.
- Allowances will only be made for leakage from underground supply pipes – this may include underground supply pipes located underneath the property.
- A leakage allowance claim must be made within three months of the leak being identified and can be applied for up to two billing periods.



## ■ Leakage Allowance Claim

Once the repair has been completed, a leakage allowance will be applied to your current or next water bill. If the repair is a private repair you should let Bristol Water know that the repair has been made by telephoning **0345 702 3797** (8.00am – 6.00pm, Monday to Friday). We may check the repair and will then notify our billing company, Bristol Wessex Billing Services (BWBSL) to process the leakage allowance. If the repair is carried out under the LeakStop Scheme, we will notify BWBSL that the leakage allowance should be applied.

If your water bill is reduced, you will also be entitled to money back on your sewerage bill. If you receive a joint Bristol Water and Wessex Water bill, the sewerage allowance will be made at the same time as the water supply allowance. Otherwise we will notify your sewerage company of the allowance we have made, although you should check this with them personally. Allowances will be applied to your current or next water bill.

## ■ Complaints about our service

We aim to provide a first class service. Our targets and compensation scheme are set out in our Bristol Water Bond leaflet – download a copy from our website [www.bristolwater.co.uk](http://www.bristolwater.co.uk) or telephone **0345 702 3797** (8.00am - 6.00pm, Monday to Friday) and request a copy.

If you are dissatisfied or have a complaint, call Customer Services on **0345 702 3797** between 8.00am - 6.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Or you can write to us at: Customer Services, Bristol Water plc, Bridgwater Road, Bristol. BS13 7AT

Or email us on [customer.services@bristolwater.co.uk](mailto:customer.services@bristolwater.co.uk)

If you remain dissatisfied after following our complaints procedure, you can refer your complaint to the Consumer Council for Water Western Region, the local water watchdog. This independent body represents the interests of water and sewerage customers and has legal duties for dealing with complaints. It will look at the facts relating to your case and take the matter up with us on your behalf. This service is free of charge.

Your letter or email detailing your complaint together with any responses you have received, should be sent to:

### **Consumer Council for Water**

8th Floor, Renslade House  
Bonhay Road  
Exeter, EX4 3AW

Or visit [www.ccwater.org.uk](http://www.ccwater.org.uk)

**Telephone:** 01392 428 028

**Office Hours:** 8.30am – 4.30pm,  
Monday - Friday



## ■ Advice for customers

This code of practice forms part of a suite of code leaflets available to customers including customer enquiries and complaints and the collection of water debts. We also have a Water Efficiency Plan covering a wide range of activities which we follow and which encourages customers to follow to ensure that water is used sensibly and waste is minimised.

If you have any questions about our codes of practice or you require copies of other leaflets mentioned in this document, please telephone Customer Services on [0345 702 3797](tel:03457023797) (8.00am - 6.00pm, Monday to Friday) or look on our website – [www.bristolwater.co.uk](http://www.bristolwater.co.uk)

### **LeakStop Scheme Terms and Conditions**

- Available to owner/occupier household customers only on first occasion a leak is found at their property on external underground supply pipe (up to the external wall of the house).
- Access to the pipe for repair must be readily available (i.e. not under or adjacent to buildings, walls, sheds, garages or any permanent structure and less than 1.5m deep)
- LeakStop invitation valid for 5 working days only from the time that the invitation is presented to the customer by the Bristol Water representative.
- The subsidised price applies to normal working hours only.
- All work carried out under the LeakStop scheme will be guaranteed for a 12 month period.
- The LeakStop scheme may be withdrawn at any time at Bristol Water's discretion or where the repair may be an unacceptable or unquantifiable risk, liability or cost to Bristol Water.
- Properties which are let to tenants on a commercial basis including council houses are not covered by LeakStop.
- Commercial, agricultural and industrial premises do not qualify for the LeakStop scheme even where there is a domestic element at the premises.
- Subsidies to replace customers supply pipes are not currently available.



## Saving water

**You can do your bit in the home and garden by following these**

### **10 easy steps:**

- don't leave the tap running when cleaning your teeth
- only use your dishwasher or washing machine when full
- take a short shower instead of a bath
- insert a one litre plastic bottle filled with water into your cistern to act as a displacement device and save up to 4000 litres of water a year
- fix those dripping taps
- use a watering can in the garden – a sprinkler can use as much water in an hour as a family uses in a week
- buy a water butt so you can use rainwater on your garden and water wisely by watering your garden at night
- use a bowl when washing up or preparing vegetables
- wash your car using a bucket of water instead of a hose
- recycle water – use your washing up or bath water to water the garden.

**For more water saving ideas, visit [www.bristolwater.co.uk](http://www.bristolwater.co.uk)**



**Leakline 0800 801011**

(manned 24 hours every day)

If you require any further information please contact

**Customer Services on 0345 702 3797**

**between 8.00am and 6.00pm, Monday to Friday**

Or you can write to us at:

**Bristol Water plc, Bridgwater Road,**

**Bristol BS13 7AT**

Or email us on **customer.services@bristolwater.co.uk**

If you have a **water supply emergency** telephone

**0345 702 3797** at any time

**www.bristolwater.co.uk**

