

NORTHUMBRIAN
WATER *living water*

YOUR WATER METER

www.nwl.co.uk

YOUR WATER METER

A water meter can help you control the size of your bill by encouraging you to reduce the amount of water used.

In addition to the annual standing charge, you only pay for the water you have used, after you have used it. If no water is used, you pay only the standing charge.



THIS LEAFLET PROVIDES INFORMATION AND ADVICE ABOUT DOMESTIC METERED WATER SUPPLIES

All domestic customers have the right to ask for a meter to be fitted to their supply at no direct charge to themselves, to allow them to pay by volume of water used.

This is on the understanding that the meter will be located in our preferred position, and the cost of installation is classed as reasonable as stated in our charges scheme.

If you want the meter to be installed in a different place, we can discuss this with you, but we may request that you pay any additional costs incurred as a result of selecting a different location before the meter can be fitted.

If you are renting your property and your tenancy agreement is for six months or more you are also entitled to have a water meter fitted. If your tenancy agreement is for less than six months, we would need your landlord's consent before we are able to install a meter.

To give you an idea of how much water you may use if you have a meter installed, please refer to the enclosed guide, **Calculating your water use and what it may cost** or visit our website www.nwl.co.uk/watermeter where you can find an online calculator to check if you would be better off on a meter. An independent calculator is also available on the Consumer Council for Water website www.ccwater.org.uk

You can apply for a meter online, visit www.nwl.co.uk/apply-for-a-meter. Alternatively you can complete and return the enclosed application form to us.

If you decide to opt for a meter and change your mind after it is installed, you can revert to the unmetered tariff if you tell us within an agreed period. Please note that if you do decide to revert, we don't remove the meter as it will be used for charging any new occupier of the property. For further information, see **Reverting to the unmetered tariff** page.

It has been our policy for a number of years to install water meters at all new properties. We may also install a meter at domestic properties when a change of occupier takes place and no unmetered charges have been requested from the new occupier.

It is also our policy to meter domestic properties where water is used in significant quantities. For example, the use of automatic garden watering devices including sprinklers and unattended hosepipes, and replenishing ponds or swimming pools.

INSTALLING THE METER

Once we have processed your application for a meter we will contact you regarding the installation. In some cases we may need to make an appointment with you to carry out a survey.

The preferred location for the meter installation is in an existing boundary box and we may fit the meter during the survey if it can be fitted in the existing boundary box. If an existing boundary box is not available, the water meter will normally be fitted in our next preferred location according to our location policy in force at that time.

All employees, including approved contractors, carry identity cards.

CHECKING FOR LEAKS WHEN WE INSTALL A METER

At the time when a meter is installed, we will check the supply pipe between the meter and your tap to establish if there is a leak in that pipe.

Where, as a result of that check a leak is detected in the supply pipe which can be repaired without additional excavation at the time the meter is installed, we will repair the leak at our expense. Where, as a result of that check a leak is detected which we are unable to repair without additional excavation, we will notify you of the leak and ask you to repair it at your expense. We are entitled to treat any subsequent loss of water from the leak as consumption, and charge you for this lost water if you fail to repair the leak. If a leak is discovered during the installation and you do not qualify for a free repair and choose not to pay us to repair it, we will continue to fit the meter and issue a Waste Water Notice.

For further information, please see our leaflet, **Dealing with leaks** which fully explains our policy on leakage.

We will aim to install your meter within 90 days of receiving your application. If we don't and the delay is our fault, you will pay as if you were metered from the 91st day. This means you will not have to pay more as a result of our delay.

However you should continue to pay your unmetered charges until a new bill is issued.

When we install your meter, some old metal pipework may be replaced with plastic pipe and fittings. Older systems may still rely on the water service pipe to provide an electrical earth. If you believe that this is the case with your property, you should contact your electricity supplier or a qualified electrician for advice. A charge may be made for this service.

In some cases the supply arrangement means it is not practical to fit a meter. In these situations we will advise you, and explain what other options are available to you. This could involve asking you to make an alteration to your existing pipework, or to fund the excess cost of installation (where the cost is over £600). If these options are not acceptable to you, we can apply an assessed charge which is calculated based on average household consumption.

READING THE METER

As soon as it's installed, your meter will be used to calculate your bill for both the water you use and your waste water services. A meter reading is evidence of the volume of water supplied.

The black and white figures on the meter dial show the amount of water used in cubic metres (m³). The white figures on the red background show parts of a cubic metre and are not counted when taking a reading. Your bill is based on whole cubic metres used. A cubic metre is 1,000 litres or 220 gallons.

We will send you a letter soon after your meter is fitted to confirm your unmetered account has been finalised and that all future charges will be based on the metered tariff. We will try to read your meter each time before sending you a bill. We will provide you with at least one bill based on an actual reading each year (April – March).

If your meter is inside your property and we are unable to gain access to read it, we will leave a card to let you know and ask you to provide a reading. If you are unable to read your meter you can contact us to arrange an appointment for us to read your meter.

If you have received a card from us asking for your meter reading or you have received an estimated bill and would prefer to pay your bill based on your own meter reading, you can leave your meter reading at www.nwl.co.uk/update-your-meter-reading.

If your meter is outside your property, this should be accessible at all times and should not be covered by landscaping, planting, block paving etc. If your meter is located internally, this should also be accessible at all times and should not be boxed in behind tiles or other decorative surfaces without an accessible opening hatch or door.

If you are moving house, you can ring us with your meter reading on the day that you move. Alternatively we will read

your meter on the day that you move, or the nearest working day if you move at the weekend, as long as you give us five working days notice. If you do not give us at least two working days notice of the move, you will be liable for charges for up to 28 days from when you inform us, until the next scheduled meter reading or until the new customer advises us they have moved in, whichever happens first.

We recommend that you take regular readings so that you get to know the amount of water you use. This practice could also help identify early on if you have a leak.



MAINTAINING THE METER

We are responsible for your meter and its associated equipment, whether this is installed inside your home or outside.

This means we will be responsible for its maintenance, repair and eventual replacement. If you damage or remove the meter you will have to pay for the repair or replacement costs.

If we need to change your meter, we will leave written details of the date of change, the meter readings taken on the day and the serial number of the new meter.

If you have an internal meter which you want to move, we must agree and then carry out the work. We will arrange a free survey to discuss your requirements and a charge will be made for any work carried out. If you decide to box in an internal meter, you must provide access to the meter and its associated equipment so it can be read and for any maintenance or meter exchange that may be required.

If your water is currently supplied by a meter which serves more than one property and you wish to pay your own account direct to us, we will carry out a survey to investigate if it is technically possible for you to have a separate meter and advise you of the costs involved. More information about shared supplies is available in our **Charges Scheme**.

Faulty meters are rare but if you believe there is something wrong you can ask us to have the meter tested by an independent company and we will send you a copy of the results. All meters are tested on equipment that is approved by Trading Standards and in line with meter legislation.

If the meter is faulty it will be replaced and there will be no charge for the test.

If the meter is not faulty, we will charge you for the test. For meters supplying domestic properties the cost will not exceed £70 (including VAT).

If your meter is faulty and we replace it, we will give you an allowance based on your past consumption. If there is no record of how much water you have used in the past, we will base this adjustment on the typical use for a similar property. Allowances are backdated to the last occasion but one on which we last read the meter, except where it has been proven that the meter began to register incorrectly at a later date.

IT IS AN OFFENCE TO TAMPER WITH YOUR METER

Tampering with water meters is a serious offence and you could be prosecuted under the Water Act 1991. You should not remove the meter or carry out any work on it at any time without our permission.

We will recover the costs of any expense, loss or damage from any person tampering with our meter.

LEAKS ON A DOMESTIC SUPPLY PIPE

One of our conditions of supply is that all water registered on the meter is the responsibility of the customer, irrespective of whether it has been used in the normal way or caused by leakage. If you do discover you have a leak, you may qualify to have your supply pipe repaired under our free repair policy.

Even a small leak on your supply pipe may result in a much higher bill than you were expecting. The first time you have a high meter reading because of a leak on your external pipework, we may make an allowance on your bill for the lost water. This will apply as long as the leak is repaired within a month of notification.

For further information, please see our leaflet, **Dealing with leaks** which fully explains our policy on leakage.



REVERTING TO THE UNMETERED TARIFF

If you choose to have a meter installed, then decide that you want to go back to the unmetered method of paying for your water, you can call us on **0345 733 5566** or write to:

Northumbrian Water
PO Box 300
Durham
DH1 9WQ

This can be done at any time as long as it is no later than one month after you have received sufficient bills from us, to give you your consumption data for the 24 months following the installation of your meter.

You will be charged on a metered basis from the date of installation of the water meter until the date you tell us that you wish to revert to the unmetered tariff.

There are some situations where you have to remain on a meter:

- If you use a garden sprinkler.
- If you have a swimming pool with a capacity of 10,000 litres or more.
- If the meter was installed when the property was built.

Please note that if you do decide to revert to the unmetered tariff, we won't physically remove the meter, as this will be used for charging any new occupier. However we will go back to charging you as an unmetered customer. Also, if you move into a property that already has a water meter, there is no option to revert to the unmetered tariff – even if the meter has only been installed recently.

Further details are available in our **Charges Scheme**, please see our website www.nwl.co.uk or call us on **0345 733 5566** to request a copy.



WATERSURE

If you or someone in your household receives certain benefits or tax credits and you live in a property with a water meter, there are government regulations to protect you.

To qualify for WaterSure you must have at least three or more children up to 19 years old for whom you are able to claim child benefit, or someone in your household who has a particular medical condition which means they use a lot of water.

If this applies to you, you do not have to pay more than the average bill and you could save money. If your meter reading is less than the average household bill, you pay based on the meter reading.

Only certain medical conditions apply and these are:

- Renal failure requiring home dialysis.
- Abdominal stomas.
- Desquamation (flaky skin loss).
- Weeping skin disease (eczema, psoriasis, varicose ulceration).
- Incontinence.
- Crohn's disease.
- Ulcerative colitis.

These conditions are those specifically covered by the government regulations. We are pleased to consider applications based on other medical conditions that involve significant use of water if this is supported by a doctor's certificate.

In addition, you or one of the people in your household must be receiving one of the following means tested benefits:

- Income related employment and support allowance.
- Housing Benefit.
- Income Support.
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance.
- Working Tax Credit.
- Pension Credit.

- Child Tax Credit (except families in receipt of the family element only).
- Universal Credit.

If you do not have a water meter but would like further information about having one installed with a view to reducing your water bill please visit our website on www.nwl.co.uk or call us on **0345 733 5566**. In most cases the water meter installation is free.

If you would like further information about the services we offer to customers who need extra care, visit the **Your services** section on our website, www.nwl.co.uk or call us on **0345 717 1100** to request a copy of our leaflet, **Extra Care**.

HOW TO CONTACT US

0345 733 5566* for all billing enquiries Monday to Friday from 8.00am until 8.00pm and from 8.00am until 1.00pm on Saturday.

0345 717 1100* for general enquiries about water and sewerage services. Monday to Friday, from 8.00am until 8.00pm, and Saturday from 9.00am until 1.00pm. This number is also available 24 hours for emergencies.

**Calls may be monitored and recorded in order to improve service quality and employee training.*

If English is not your first language we offer a free telephone translation service. Let us know which language you require and we will arrange for an interpreter to join the call to assist.

Deaf and hard of hearing customers can contact us using Text Relay – just prefix any of our listed numbers with **18001** and a Text Relay operator will join the call. Alternatively you can let us know the name of someone you trust who has agreed to talk to us on your behalf.

Contact us by email through our website **www.nwl.co.uk** where you can also apply for a water meter online.

Follow us on Twitter  **[@nwater_care](https://twitter.com/nwater_care)**

INDEPENDENT ADVICE

If you would like independent advice on your water bill, you can contact any of the following:

- Citizens Advice Bureau.
- Consumer Advice Centre.
- Stepchange Debt Charity.

You will find their telephone number and address in the telephone directory for your area.

If you receive Income Support, Income based Jobseekers Allowance, Income Related Employment and Support Allowance, Universal Credit or Pension Credit, your local JobCentre Plus or the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) may be able to arrange for payments from your benefit to come directly to us. This is called Water Direct which is part of the Third Party Deduction Scheme. If you would prefer this method, we can make the application on your behalf, or Job Centre Plus or the DWP may forward your details to us. Please call us for more information on **0345 733 5566**.

The Consumer Council for Water represents customers' interests and offers free independent advice. It can be contacted at:

Consumer Council for Water
c/o 1st Floor
Victoria Square House
Birmingham
B2 4AJ
Tel: **0300 034 2222**
Website: **www.ccwater.org.uk**
Opening hours: Monday to Friday,
8.30am until 5.00pm

FINDING OUT MORE

This leaflet forms part of our Code of Practice for domestic customers, which provides customers with essential information about our company. All of our Codes of Practice are approved by the Office of Water Services (Ofwat).

Other leaflets within our Code of Practice are available:

- **Our promise to you** (our service level and how we will compensate you if things go wrong).
- **Managing debt** (our Code of Practice on debt).
- **Dealing with leaks** (our Code of Practice on leakage, guidance on pipe ownership and our repair policy).
- **Getting answers** (our Code of Practice on complaints).
- **Extra Care** - Can we help you?
- **Getting water to your home.**
- **Our sewerage services.**

We also offer a range of leaflets on protecting the environment, sewer flooding and water efficiency in the home and garden. Visit our website at www.nwl.co.uk or call **0345 717 1100** to request a leaflet or for your free 'Save-a-flush' toilet device, which saves a litre of water every time you flush.

EXTRA CARE

Help is at hand if you would like particular help from us such as reading your bill to you before we post it. You can also register for Extra Care if you have an illness or restricted mobility, so we can help you if there is a problem with your water supply. Bills and leaflets are available in Braille, large print, on audio tape or on CD.

There is more information on our website, including our leaflet **Extra Care**. You can also register a password online at www.nwl.co.uk or call us on **0345 717 1100**.



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www.nwl.co.uk

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