

NORTHUMBRIAN
WATER *living water*

DEALING WITH LEAKS

www.nwl.co.uk

DEALING WITH LEAKS

OUR CODE OF PRACTICE ON DEALING WITH LEAKS

We have a duty to our customers and to the environment to promote the wise use of water and to find and repair leaks as quickly as possible. We want to give you the best advice to look after your water pipes and help you to find and repair leaks as quickly as possible.

This booklet will explain who is responsible for a leak, how to detect a leak and provide information about how we can support you to get it fixed.

In this leaflet...

- Guidance on pipe ownership.
- Fixing leaks.
- Our policy on checking for leaks when a meter is installed.
- Our policy on dealing with a large bill caused by a leak.



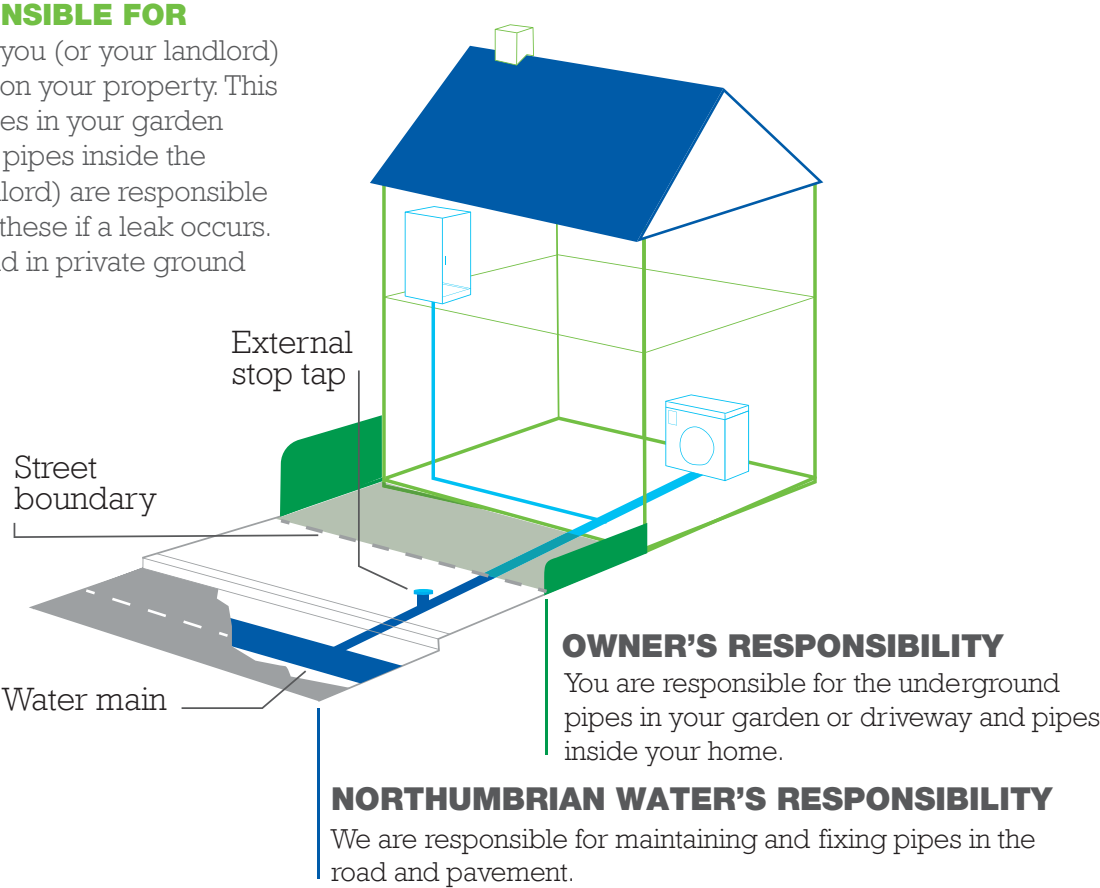
GUIDANCE ON PIPE OWNERSHIP

WHAT WE'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR

In most circumstances, Northumbrian Water owns the pipes in the road or public highway. This includes the pipe connecting the water main in the street to the stopcock or meter (which we also own) outside your property. We are responsible for maintaining and repairing leaks on these pipes where the street and your property boundary meet.

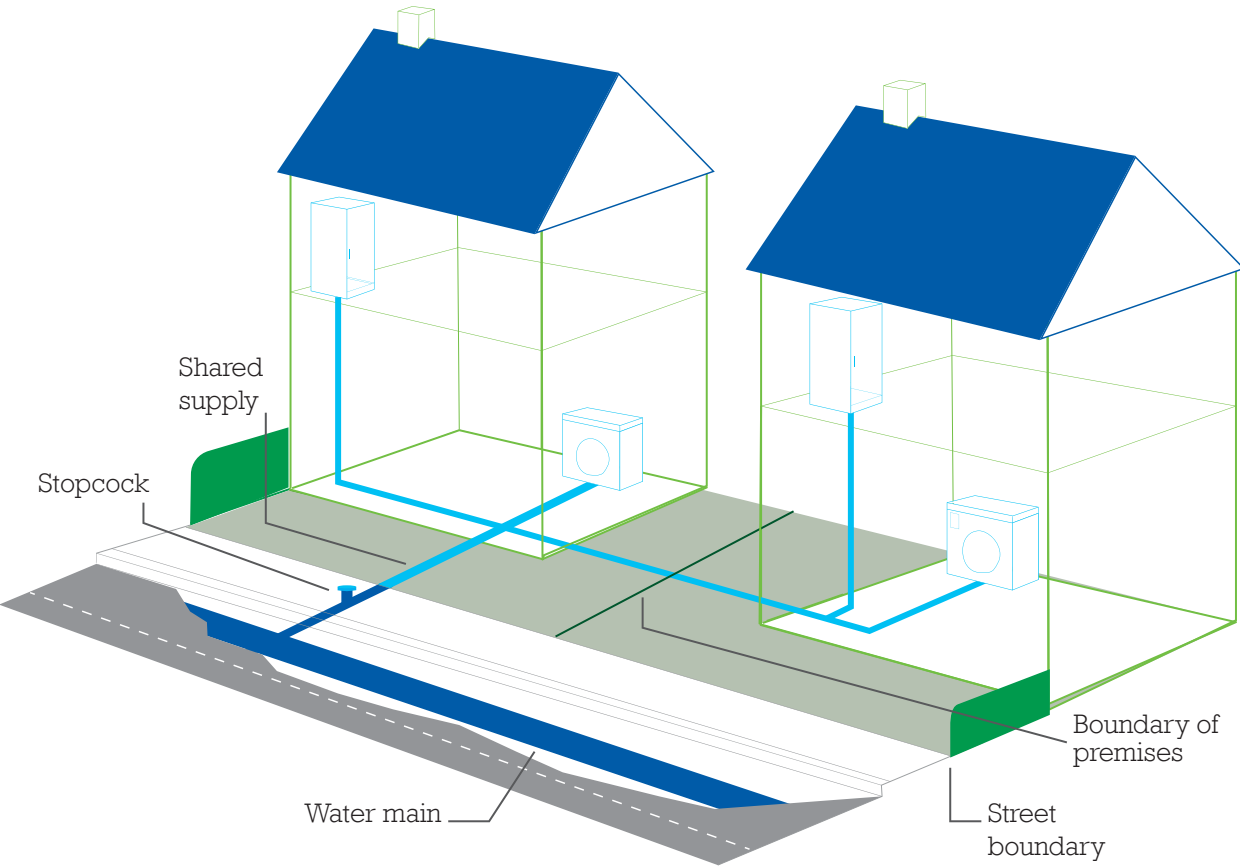
WHAT YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR

If you are the homeowner you (or your landlord) own all of the water pipes on your property. This includes underground pipes in your garden or driveway as well as the pipes inside the building. You (or your landlord) are responsible for repairing or replacing these if a leak occurs. This includes pipework laid in private ground owned by a third party.



Sometimes it is difficult to tell who is responsible for a pipe, but we are always happy to advise you. You can ring us on [0345 850 8602](tel:0345 850 8602).

In some cases, properties share a supply pipe, where the private part of the water supply serves several properties. This means it is jointly owned and if there is a problem the responsibility and costs are shared between the properties. Sometimes this may mean that although only one customer has reported a leak or noticed a problem, a number of neighbours are affected and have to share any costs.



HELPING YOU TO FIX THE LEAK

If you have a leak on your private supply pipe we are here to help you to get it fixed as soon as possible. We can help and advise at any time. Here's what to do:

1. CONTACT US

Call us on **0800 393 084** to let us know about the leak and where it's located. We'll let you know who is responsible for the repair and what we can do to help you fix it. If you have a smartphone, you can download our free app (available for Apple and Android devices) called 'NWG Utileyes' to help us quickly identify the location of the leak. With your permission the app will let us access your smartphone camera so we can see what you are looking at.

2. CHECK YOUR HOME INSURANCE

If the leak is your responsibility check your home insurance as you may be covered for the repairs under your household insurance policy. If you're a tenant, contact your landlord who may be responsible for the repairs.

3. DO YOU HAVE SEPARATE HOME EMERGENCY INSURANCE COVER?

Have you taken out a separate insurance policy, with a home assistance provider, for example HomeServe, to cover leaks on your water supply pipe? If you have, give them a call.

4. NOT COVERED BY INSURANCE *

We can help you to pay for the costs of the repair with our 12 month interest free ** payment option, if you don't have any insurance cover for fixing leaks. For a free quotation contact our specialist leak repair company, NWG Total Water Solutions on **0800 028 3557**.

Alternatively, you can visit www.watersafe.org.uk or call **0333 207 9030** to find a list of approved plumbers in your area.

* Please be aware that we are required to instigate a legal process if you do not repair the leak within 30 days of the leak being confirmed. This process can result in additional costs for yourself or your landlord.

** If you default on the payment plan the full amount may be due. Terms and conditions apply.

If paying for the pipe repair will cause you financial difficulties, we may be able to help in some cases.

For more details or if you have any questions, call us on **0345 733 5566**.

5. ONCE YOUR LEAK HAS BEEN REPAIRED

Please let us know by calling **0345 733 5566**.

If you have a water meter we'll also ask you to provide us with two meter readings, four weeks apart. This will help us to calculate any allowance that may be due. An allowance will only be given if the leak is repaired within 30 days. For more information about leak allowances please visit our website www.nwl.co.uk or call **0345 733 5566**. If you need help reading your meter, we can help, please get in touch.

A SIMPLE LEAK CHECK

You can carry out a simple check to see if you have a leak. Take a meter reading and make sure there are no taps or other water using appliances running in your house. Wait an hour and take another reading. If the reading has increased, you may have a leak.

Contact us on **0345 733 5566** for guidance.





PAYING FOR WATER USING A METER

All household customers have the right to ask for a water 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 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. To give you an idea of how much water you may use if you have a meter installed, please 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 CCW The voice for water consumers' www.ccwater.org.uk. You can apply for a meter online, visit www.nwl.co.uk/services/water/water-meters/apply-for-a-meter/ or call 0345 733 5566.

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 cannot be repaired without additional excavation, we will notify you of the leak and ask you to repair it at your expense. If you fail to repair the leak, we are entitled to treat any subsequent loss of water from the leak as consumption, and charge you for this lost water.

LEAKS ON A METERED WATER SUPPLY

If you have a meter, you pay for the water which passes through it. Even a small leak on your supply may result in a much higher bill than you were expecting.

To avoid large bills caused by leaks, we recommend that you take regular readings so that you get to know the amount of water you use. This could also help identify early on if you have a leak. Visit our website to find out how to find and read your meter.

If the leak is external and your responsibility we will support you to get it fixed. See page 5, ‘ **helping you fix the leak**’.

If a change in consumption is identified on a metered supply that is a result of a leak, we will backdate the allowance to that point. In normal circumstances, leakage allowances will be granted for the meter reading cycle period plus one month. On occasions, allowances may be granted for a longer period. We’ll ask you to provide two meter readings, four weeks apart to help us calculate any allowance that may be due. An allowance will only be given if the leak is repaired within 30 days. An allowance will not be granted if you were aware of the leak and have not repaired it or if the leak was due to your negligence.

If we grant a leakage allowance, it is normally based on your past consumption. If there is no record of how much water you have used in the past, we are required to base the adjustment on the typical use for a similar property. If you have recently had a leak fixed and think you may be entitled to an allowance, call us on **0345 733 5566**.

If we have used the typical usage for a similar property to calculate your allowance, when you receive your next bill you may find that your actual usage is significantly different from our calculations. If this is the case and your actual usage is significantly lower, we will consider granting a further leakage allowance. If your actual usage is considerably higher, then we would not normally ask you to pay the difference.

Please call us on **0345 733 5566** if you would like us to review the leakage allowance in the light of your actual usage.

We do not give a leakage allowance in the following circumstances:

- To non-household customers.
- If the leak is internal.
- If the leak was caused by your negligence.
- If you knew about the leak but failed to arrange for its timely repair.

PLEASE NOTE:

- Leakage allowances are granted once per customer per property. However, in certain exceptional circumstances more than one allowance may be granted.
- If we grant you a leakage allowance for lost water, you will also receive an allowance for the associated sewerage costs, providing that the water has not entered the sewerage system. This sewerage allowance is normally also available to non-domestic customers, in contrast to the leakage allowance.
- For mixed use properties i.e. those properties which have only a single water supply and are jointly occupied by both domestic customers and non-domestic customers, an allowance will be granted where the property is principally used as a domestic premises. Where principal use of the property is non-domestic, we will grant a partial allowance to ensure that a domestic customer is not disadvantaged.

LEAD PIPES

If your home was built before 1970 it may have lead pipes. We have an obligation to make sure the water supplied to your property meets the current standard but you may still want to consider replacing them.

We have a policy called ‘Our water quality standards and replacing your lead pipes’, which explains how we will replace our communication pipe (the pipe that carries water between the water mains and the boundary of your property) at no cost to you when you replace your lead supply pipe.

If you let us know that you intend to replace your lead supply pipe, we will arrange for the replacement of our communication pipe at no cost to you when you replace your supply pipe.

Contact us on **0345 717 1100** for guidance or you can download the policy and application form from our website **www.nwl.co.uk**.

ELECTRICAL EARTHING INSTALLATIONS TO YOUR WATER SUPPLY

For many years, earthing connections were often made to an earth electrode buried in the ground and attached to the incoming metal water pipe. This method of earthing was deemed safe until 1966, when it became unacceptable to rely on the incoming metal water pipe as the earthing point for electrical installations.

All new and replacement water pipes are made from non-conductive material and will not provide an electrical earth. When alterations, extensions and repairs are carried out on your water service to your property or on our mains in the vicinity, the electrical installation in the property may become dangerous. We do not accept responsibility for your electrical installation. In modern homes, electrical installations including boilers, cookers, storage heaters and central heating pipes are connected to an earth point, usually at the electricity meter.

Correct earthing and bonding is vital for the safety of an electrical installation, and it is the customers', or property owners' responsibility to make sure that it is effective without relying on the incoming metal pipe. If an earthing point is available at your meter, you are strongly advised to use it. You can find out if you have an earth point, or if one can be provided, by contacting your electricity supplier, electricity distribution company or a competent electrician. They are able to inspect your electrical installation and will give you an estimate for any work necessary to bring the earthing (and bonding) arrangements in your house up to a safe standard as required by present regulations. For more information contact your electricity provider.

LEAKS IN THE STREET

Our dedicated leakage technicians are out every day across our region looking for and repairing leaks. If you spot a leak in the street, you can help us by reporting it by calling our leakline on **0800 393 084** (freephone - 24 hours) or you can tweet a photograph of the leak to **🐦@nwater_care**.

We will fix the leak as soon as we can whilst trying to minimise disruption to householders or road users.

You can check for leaks by looking for damp areas on the ground in dry weather, lush vegetation during hot weather, reduced water flow or noise on your water pipes.





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).
- Getting answers (our Code of Practice on complaints).
- Priority Services - can we help you?
- Your water meter.
- 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**.

PRIORITY SERVICES

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

To order any code of practice leaflets in Braille, large print, or on a CD, please call **0345 717 1100**.

HOW TO CONTACT US

For help and advice about an ongoing leak:

0345 850 8602

To repair a leak:

0800 028 3557

To report a leak in the street:

0800 393 084 * (Freephone - 24 hours)

For help and advice about your bill:

0345 733 5566 *

Email us through our website at:

www.nwl.co.uk

* 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.

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