

Since December 2005 businesses have had the option of switching to an alternative water supplier if they use 50 megalitres (50,000 cubic metres) of water a year or more and satisfy other criteria. To find out if you might benefit, see our WaterFacts leaflet *Am I eligible for water competition?*

### How do I contact my water company?

The contact details for your local company are on your bill, on their website and in the telephone directory under 'water'. Most companies have a 24-hour emergency number for water supply or sewerage emergencies, which you should have available.

When you contact them, you should be dealt with promptly, politely and professionally by experienced staff. If you write to them about an account query or a complaint, they should reply within 10 working days of receiving your letter or email. You are entitled to fixed compensation if they fail to meet this standard.

### What level of customer service can I expect?

The water company should make information covering standards of service, charges and billing arrangements easily accessible. They should offer you detailed advice about different tariffs and water efficiency. You may be assigned an account manager. Check if the company has a charter for business customers.

### What quality of water will I receive?

The Water Quality (Water Supply) Regulations 1989 requires water companies to supply wholesome water. If they fail to meet the standards, you are entitled to fixed compensation. The Drinking Water Inspectorate ([www.dwi.gov.uk](http://www.dwi.gov.uk)) is responsible for regulating the quality of drinking water, and keeps a public register of its sampling results, available for inspection at each water company.

Businesses that use water in manufacturing or other processes may be able to reduce costs by using an alternative water supply. For example, if you use a large amount of water for cooling or washdown, using non-potable water (not for domestic or cooking purposes) or untreated water from a borehole or watercourse (subject to licence by the Environment Agency) may be cheaper.

### What should my water pressure be?

Section 65 of the Water Industry Act 1991 requires water companies to supply water at a constant pressure that, under normal circumstances (but subject to exceptions to allow for circumstances beyond their control) will reach the top storey of every building in their area by gravity from a water tower or reservoir of their choice. The legal minimum pressure is 7 metres static head in the communication pipe, equivalent to a flow of 9 litres per minute. That would enable you to fill a 4.5 litre (1 gallon) container in 30 seconds from a ground-floor tap.



You may be entitled to fixed compensation if the water company fails to maintain this pressure, if you claim within three months of the incident.

The Water Industry Act 1999 doesn't specify a maximum water pressure. Water companies aren't responsible for pressure problems in your private supply pipe work, internal plumbing fittings or water-using appliances.

Ensure your water meter is the correct size for the pressure and flow requirements of your business. Your local water company can offer advice.

### Will I be notified of supply interruptions?

Water companies must notify you in writing of planned supply interruptions and give you 48 hours' notice for interruptions of more than four hours.

They can't notify you of unplanned interruptions (due, for example, to a burst water main), but they must restore the supply within 12 hours, unless it is on a major distribution main in which case they have 48 hours to restore the supply.

You may be entitled to fixed compensation if the supply isn't restored in time. Water companies don't have to provide an alternative water supply although, for unplanned interruptions, they should advise you how you can access water for drinking and sanitary purposes. Assess the impact on your business of a loss of supply and consider whether you have suitable storage arrangements.

### Can I get help with repairing leaks?

Each water company has its own leakage policy. It is your responsibility to monitor your water supply by reading your meter(s) regularly to detect any sudden increase in recorded usage, which may indicate a leak. If your water usage is high (e.g. hospitals, schools and food preparation plants), read your meter(s) at least once a week. See our WaterFacts leaflet *Making savings on my water bill - Advice for business customers*.

### How do I comply with water regulations?

Owners and occupiers of premises and plumbers have a legal duty to ensure that installations satisfy

the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999. Advance notice of proposed installations must be given to the water company.

The Government requires water companies to enforce the regulations. Your water company can provide copies of their Codes of Practice on Enforcement. As with the previous Water Supply Byelaws, water companies will inspect new and existing installations to check the regulations are being met. Ask a specialist inspector for advice.

### What if something goes wrong?

Contact your water or sewerage company as soon as possible (preferably in writing) if you are unhappy with their service or if something goes wrong. You will need to take your complaint to senior management level before referring it to an external body. If you are still dissatisfied, you can ask the Consumer Council for Water to investigate your complaint free of charge. The contact details for your local Consumer Council for Water office should appear on the back of your bills, or you can email them via our website [www.ccwater.org.uk](http://www.ccwater.org.uk) or contact our head office on 0845 039 2837.

### What you can do now

- Find out about different tariffs available to business customers.
- Check whether the company has a charter specifically for business customers.
- If your annual usage exceeds 50,000 cubic metres, find out if you're eligible to switch to an alternative supplier.
- Check whether you can use non-potable or untreated water to meet some of your needs.
- Check your water storage arrangements are adequate in case of a supply interruption.
- Check your water meter is the correct size for your business.
- Read your water meter(s) regularly.

*You have a right to a clear, detailed and timely response to complaints and enquiries and you have a responsibility to talk to your local water company as soon as you have a problem.*

*There is a range of printed fact sheets available from the Consumer Council for Water or visit [www.ccwater.org.uk](http://www.ccwater.org.uk).*