

As a domestic customer of your local water and sewerage company, you have no choice over your supplier. The Consumer Council for Water believes it is very important that you are satisfied with the service you receive.

How do I contact my water company?

The contact details for your local company are on their bills, on their website and in the telephone directory under 'water'. Most companies have central call centres which deal with account and operational queries. There will be a 24-hour emergency number for water supply or sewerage emergencies and you should make sure you have this number readily 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 a fixed compensation payment if they fail to meet this standard.

What level of service should I receive?

The water company should ensure that you can easily access clear information about standards of service, metering charges and billing arrangements. They should also respond to enquiries about these issues quickly and efficiently, ensuring that you are fully informed.

What water quality should I receive?

The Water Quality (Water Supply) Regulations 1989 requires water companies to supply wholesome water. If they fail to meet any of the guaranteed standards, you are entitled to a fixed compensation payment.

The standards apply to when the water passes from the company's pipe to the customer's pipe. The water company is not responsible for any deterioration in water quality within your premises (except in the case of zinc, copper or lead).

The Drinking Water Inspectorate (www.dwi.gov.uk) is responsible for regulating the quality of drinking water, and keeps a public register of its sampling results which is available for inspection at the principal office of each water supply company.

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 a number of 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. This is one of the guaranteed standards required by Ofwat (the water industry



regulator). You may be entitled to a fixed compensation payment if the water company fails to maintain this minimum standard, but you must claim within three months of the incident date.

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

Will I be notified about water supply interruptions?

Water companies must notify you in writing of planned water supply interruptions. If your supply will be interrupted for more than four hours, you must be given 48 hours' notice.

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 a fixed compensation payment if the supply isn't restored within the relevant timescale. There is no statutory requirement for water companies to provide an alternative water supply although, for unplanned interruptions, they should take reasonable steps to advise you of how you can access an alternative supply for drinking and sanitary purposes.

Can I get help with finding and repairing leaks in my pipe work?

Each water company has its own policy on detecting and repairing leaks. There is no statutory timescale for the company to repair leaks. Companies offer metered customers a leakage allowance subject to certain conditions. Most companies offer this as a one-off per customer/property. It's worth contacting your local water company for details. You may wish to monitor your water supply by reading your meter regularly to detect any unexpected upturn in recorded usage which may indicate a leak.

What if something goes wrong?

Always contact the water supply or sewerage company as soon as possible (preferably in writing) if you are unhappy with the service or response you receive from them, or if something goes wrong. Each company has its own complaint procedure, and you will normally need to escalate your complaint to a senior management level before referring it to an external body. If, after doing that, you remain dissatisfied, you can ask 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 via our website www.ccwater.org.uk, or contact our head office on 0845 039 2837.

What you can do now

- If you're struggling to pay your bill, contact your water company to discuss the options available.
- Find the details of your local water company and keep them safe.
- If you have made a complaint, check to see if the reply from the water company is within 10 working days from date of receipt of your complaint or account query.
- Check your water pressure.
- If your supply was interrupted, check to see how much notice was given and when the supply was restored.
- Read your water meter(s) regularly to identify any leaks promptly.
- Find the details of your local Consumer Council for Water office and keep them safe.

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.