

## Your water services

We supply around 2.6 billion litres of water every day through 31,400km of water mains stretching from Gloucestershire, across London and into Kent. About three-quarters of our water comes from rivers, with the rest from underground streams and natural underground reservoirs.

This section tells you about:

- the excellent quality of water we deliver to your tap
- water pressure and flow
- who is responsible for pipe work in and around your home
- finding and fixing leaks
- when we have to interrupt your water supply
- saving water
- requesting new connections to our water mains

In an emergency call our 24 hour customer service team on **0800 316 9800**.

There is a 24 hour Textphone service for the deaf or hard of hearing on **0800 316 9898**. Please note, voice calls or mobile numbers aren't accepted via this number.

Further information is available at [thameswater.co.uk/yourwater](https://thameswater.co.uk/yourwater).

## Drinking water quality

You can find out all about water quality at [thameswater.co.uk/waterquality](https://thameswater.co.uk/waterquality).

We pride ourselves on the quality of our drinking water. We carry out more than 500,000 tests every year by taking samples at our treatment works, from our water mains and pipes, as well as from customers' taps.

Since 2010, more than 99.95 % of tests taken from customers' taps have met the standard required by UK and European legislation and we work hard to continually improve the quality of your drinking water.

The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2010 (as amended), controls the quality of domestic water supplies and is part of the responsibility of the secretary of state for the environment food and rural affairs. These regulations cover how the water should taste, look and smell, as well as the chemical content, treatment requirements and monitoring arrangements.

### Your drinking water

You can get a free report on the water quality in your area by visiting [thameswater.co.uk/waterqualitysearch](https://thameswater.co.uk/waterqualitysearch) and typing in your postcode, or you can call us on **0800 316 9800**. We'll send your report within seven days.

You can also view our water quality records on request by calling us on the number above and making an appointment. These records are held at our head office:

Thames Water  
Clearwater Court  
Vastern Road  
Reading  
RG1 8DB

## Concerns about water quality

If you're concerned about the quality of your drinking water, call us straight away on **0800 316 9800**. We'll ask you a few simple questions to help identify the cause of the problem and decide on the best course of action.

Occasionally our scientists will need to investigate further, in which case we'll call you as soon as possible. This is usually within one working day to offer advice and tell you what we're doing. If your concern is about illness, our scientists will normally call you within one hour to respond to your initial enquiry.

To resolve the problem we may need to inspect your plumbing system or take water samples for testing. If we need to do this we'll make an appointment that suits you.

If we need to test your water, we'll take a sample for laboratory analysis. If we find anything unusual, we'll call you as soon as the results are available and, if needed, tell you what precautions you should take, such as boiling your water. We'll aim to send you a full written report within ten working days.

Where large numbers of properties are involved we may use media channels to keep everyone informed.

## Lead water pipes and content in drinking water

Before the late 1970s, lead pipes were often used to bring water from our mains into a property. If your property was built after the 1970s, or has been modernised since then, the connecting pipes will probably be made of copper or plastic.

## Lead content in drinking water

The regulatory standard for lead content in drinking water is 10 parts per million, or 10mg/l. If a water sample taken from your cold kitchen tap contains a concentration of lead greater than 10mg/l we must inform you and your local Environmental Health Department. Details of how you can find more information about lead in the water supply are described in the section above.

## Testing for levels of lead

Lead in the water supply isn't usually a problem in our area. This is because our hard water tends to produce a protective layer of limescale between the water and the pipes. Adding a small yet harmless amount of phosphate, which acts like a limescale, at the water treatment process makes sure lead levels are kept very low. We're also proactively replacing lead pipes on our network in areas where lead levels are slightly higher, while at the same time, encouraging our customers to replace lead pipes within their own properties. We regularly check the lead levels in water samples taken from some of our customers' taps.

## Replacing lead water pipes

If you're worried about having lead pipes and would like more information, visit [thameswater.co.uk/lead](https://thameswater.co.uk/lead). We'll take a water sample from your kitchen tap and discuss the results with you. We'll let you know if your pipes need to be replaced and what we can do to help you. If you replace your lead water supply pipe, we may replace the lead communication pipe belonging to us, depending on how much lead we find in your water. Please call us on **0800 316 9800** if you are considering replacing your part of a lead service pipe.

If you share a lead supply pipe with your neighbours and you or your neighbours agree to have it replaced, we'll normally ask you to lay separate pipes for each of your properties.

You can find more information and answers to frequently asked questions about lead in the drinking water supply, as well as details of our lead pipework replacement scheme by visiting our website at [thameswater.co.uk/lead](https://thameswater.co.uk/lead) or by calling us on **0800 316 9800**.

## Restriction of use notice

Very rarely we may need to issue you with a restriction of use notice. This notice will advise you to either boil the water before use or not use your water at all. If we have to do this, as a result of a problem with the water being supplied to your property, we will automatically pay you £30 under our customer guarantee scheme. See the section [thameswater.co.uk/ourcommitment](https://www.thameswater.co.uk/ourcommitment) of this document or refer to our leaflet - Our guarantees to you, a copy of which can be found at [thameswater.co.uk/ourcommitment](https://www.thameswater.co.uk/ourcommitment).

## Cloudy drinking water

Water supplies are affected by changes in the pressure of the water in our mains, due to burst pipes or essential maintenance work. This can occasionally disturb sediment in the pipes which, for a short time, may result in a brown discoloration to the water. Or air can be trapped in our mains, temporarily causing the water to look milky white. If the problem persists, please let us know. You can also find out more by visiting the frequently asked questions section on our website at [thameswater.co.uk/waterqualitysearch](https://www.thameswater.co.uk/waterqualitysearch).

## Water quality advice – internal/private plumbing

If you're concerned about the quality of your hot water or water in your bathroom, your local council's environmental health officer will be able to give advice.

## If you have further concerns or are dissatisfied

If you're unhappy with the response we give you, or if you have any further concerns about your water quality, you can contact either the Consumer Council for Water or the Drinking Water Inspectorate, who may investigate on your behalf. Further information can be found at [www.ccwater.org.uk](https://www.ccwater.org.uk) and [www.dwi.gov.uk](https://www.dwi.gov.uk).

# Water pressure

## Water pressure and how it's measured

Water pressure is the force of water as it comes out of your tap when it's turned on fully. It's measured in 'bars' and in general, we aim to supply you with a minimum pressure of one bar (approximately ten metres head) in our communication pipe. This is the pipe which connects your water supply pipe with our water mains. See diagram in the Water Pipes section.

One bar of pressure is the force required to raise water to a height of ten metres, which is slightly more than the height of a two-storey house. This is a reference level of service for water pressure and is used as a guide.

## What affects water pressure?

Pressure can be affected by a number of things. For example, how far you live from the nearest reservoir, water tower or pump; the height of your property; if you have a leak on your water supply pipe; or how much water is being used by you or your neighbours – especially if you share a water supply pipe with them.

Even the way water moves around your home (water flow) and the different types of appliances you use can affect water pressure.

## Water flow

The movement of water that flows through your pipes is known as 'water flow'. We aim to supply you with a minimum flow of nine litres per minute.

You can only get a certain amount of water through a pipe at any one time. The width of your water supply pipe and the number of water appliances attached to it can affect the way water flows into and around your home.

## Checking your water pressure and flow

As a guide, your first tap in your home, usually your cold kitchen tap, should be able to fill a 4.5 litre (1 gallon) bucket in 30 seconds with all the other taps and appliances turned off.

If you think your water pressure is too low, please call us on **0800 316 9800**. If we're responsible for the problem, we'll tell you what we will do. If it's out of our control, we'll offer advice on what you can do to improve the situation.

## If you experience low water flow and reduced pressure

If you share your water supply pipe with one or more of your neighbours, you may experience low water flow and reduced pressure when your neighbours are using their water appliances or taps at the same time as you. If you experience this, you can consider one of two things:

- Install a water storage tank, which is gravity fed or pumped. The tank will automatically top-up when water is used, giving you a constant supply of water. You or your plumber will need to let our water regulations team know if you're considering fitting a pump to make sure any changes you make meet the required standards. The team can be contacted through our customer centre on **0800 316 9800**, Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, or by email at [water.regulations@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:water.regulations@thameswater.co.uk).
- Arrange for your own water supply pipe to be fitted, which is connected directly to our communication pipe. This means you will no longer rely on a shared pipe. Instead, you'll receive your water supply directly from our mains.

If you decide to have your own water supply pipe fitted, this will need to be at your cost. For more information visit [thameswater.co.uk/developerservices](https://www.thameswater.co.uk/developerservices) or call us on **0800 009 3921**. We'll give you advice, tell you what we can do for you and provide you with a quote.

## Our customer guarantee scheme

If the water pressure in our communication pipe falls below seven metres head (approximately 70% of one bar) twice in a 28 day period, and lasts for at least one hour on each occasion, you may receive a customer guarantee scheme payment, usually as a credit to your water services account, subject to certain conditions. This guarantee doesn't apply if the low pressure is caused by work we're doing on our water mains, for example repairing bursts and leaks or because of drought.

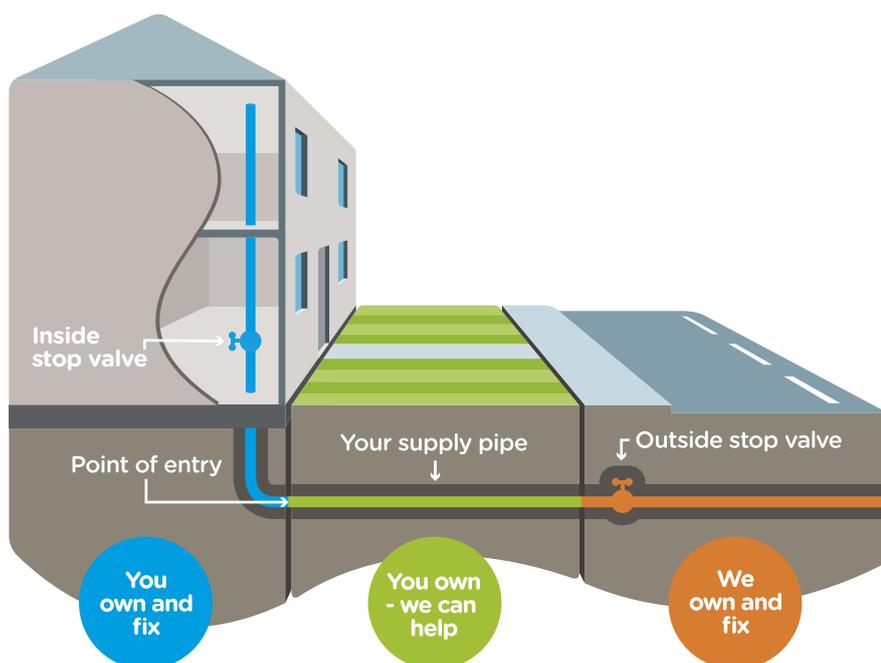
Only one payment will be made in any financial year (1 April to 31 March). For more information, see 'our guarantees to you' at [thameswater.co.uk/ourcommitment](https://www.thameswater.co.uk/ourcommitment).

If it's possible for us to know you have had two periods of low pressure, we'll make the payment automatically. Otherwise, you can submit a claim for the payment within three months of the date of the second period of low pressure.

## Water pipes

### Responsibility of the pipes

The picture below shows how a typical house is connected to our water main in the street.



### Our pipes

We're responsible for the communication pipe, which connects our water mains with your water supply pipe. This pipe usually runs from our water main in the road, to the boundary of your property. There may be an outside stop valve and sometimes a meter which we also own.

We're responsible for keeping our meters and pipes in good repair. However, you may have to pay the reasonable costs of repair if you or your plumber should damage them.

### Your pipes

The rest of the pipes, outside and inside your home, are yours or your landlord's responsibility. This includes your internal stop valve. This valve can usually be found under your kitchen sink. It can be used to turn off your water in an emergency or, for example, when fitting a new kitchen.

It's also your responsibility to maintain your water supply pipe, stopping leaks and replacing or mending it when it bursts. You still need to do this if your water supply pipe runs under other properties before reaching yours. If you share a water supply pipe with your neighbours, then you and your neighbours are jointly responsible for it.

Even though your water supply pipe is your responsibility, if it does leak we'll help you get it replaced or fixed. See section on 'water leaks', for more information.

### Water pipes and fittings inside your home

If you're the owner of the property, you're responsible for fixing any leakage or wastage from your pipes, fixtures or fittings inside your property. Under Section 73 of the Water Industry Act 1991, we have a legal duty to make sure water supplied by us isn't wasted, as it's a criminal offence to waste water.

For further details go to [thameswater.co.uk/waterfitting](https://www.thameswater.co.uk/waterfitting).

## Pipework and appliance regulations

The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 are national requirements for the design, installation, composition and maintenance of water fixtures and fittings. All water fittings must comply with these regulations and can be subject to inspection.

If you're planning on doing any work on the water fixtures and fittings at your property, they will need to meet the requirements of these regulations. The regulations are designed to protect consumers and the environment from poor water quality, unnecessary waste, misuse and the contamination of wholesome water supplies. For more details search for water fittings regulations on our website [thameswater.co.uk/waterfitting](https://thameswater.co.uk/waterfitting) or call us on **0800 316 9800** and ask for details.

## Electrical earthing

In order to provide protection against electric shock and fire, all electrical installations must have an effective electrical earth. This is your responsibility. Prior to 1967, it was common practice for the incoming customer's water supply pipe to be used for electrical earthing. Since 1967, the incoming water pipe isn't considered an adequate earth and an alternative method must be used.

Like most water companies we now fit plastic water pipes that don't provide an electrical earth. When we do this we'll remind you to check your electrical earthing is suitable. If you have any doubts over the safety of your electrical installation, particularly if it was installed before 1967, you should contact your electricity company or a qualified electrician.

## Protecting your water pipes

All the pipes, taps and fittings in and around your home need care and attention, especially during cold weather.

- Cover water pipes, valves and tanks with insulating material, especially in unheated areas.
- Fix your pipes securely to walls and joists.
- Repair dripping taps.
- Check you can turn off and on your internal stop valve, usually found under your kitchen sink.

You'll then know you can turn your water supply off in an emergency

## If you share your water supply pipe with your neighbours

Shared water supply pipes are normally found in older properties, where one water supply pipe serves more than one household. When considering buying a property you may wish to check with the owner to see if it has a shared water supply pipe.

## If your shared water supply pipe leaks

See our section on finding and fixing leaks, if you think your shared supply pipe is leaking.

## Lead water pipes

Before the late 1970s, lead pipes were often used to bring water from our mains into a property. If your property was built after the 1970s, or has been modernised since then, the connecting pipes will probably be made of copper or plastic.

For more information on lead pipes and lead content in drinking water, please see the section on your 'drinking water quality'.

## Replacing lead water pipes

If you're worried about having lead pipes and would like more information, visit [thameswater.co.uk/lead](https://thameswater.co.uk/lead). We'll take a water sample from your kitchen tap and discuss the results with you. We'll let you know if your pipes need to be replaced and what we can do to help you. If you replace your lead water supply pipe, we may replace the lead communication pipe belonging to us, depending on how much lead we find in your water. Please call us on **0800 316 9800** if you are considering replacing your part of a lead service pipe.

If you share a lead supply pipe with your neighbours and you or your neighbours agree to have it replaced, we'll normally ask you to lay separate pipes for each of your properties.

## Water leaks

### Finding and fixing leaks

We regularly carry out work to find and fix leaks. It's important we do this to keep you in a constant supply, but also to make sure we aren't wasting water. It's also important you make sure none of your pipes are leaking, you can find out more about how to do this and what to do if you find a leak at [thameswater.co.uk/burstsandleaks](https://thameswater.co.uk/burstsandleaks).

## Turning off your water

### When we have to turn off your water supply

We aim to deliver a constant supply of water but sometimes we have to turn it off, or the pressure may drop. This can be caused by a burst main, pumps or their power supply failing, or due to planned work.

If we can't put your supply back to normal within six hours, we'll arrange for an alternative supply and inform you where this can be located. You can find out more about the work we're doing near you by entering your postcode at [thameswater.co.uk/inyourarea](https://thameswater.co.uk/inyourarea). You can also call us on **0800 316 9800**, our lines are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

### Unplanned changes to your supply

If there's an unplanned change to your supply, we'll put your water supply back on within 12 hours of knowing about the problem. If a larger main bursts, we guarantee to restore your water supply within 48 hours. We will tell you when your supply will be restored as soon as we can.

If we fail to meet these targets you may be eligible for a payment under our customer guarantee scheme at [thameswater.co.uk/ourguarantees](https://thameswater.co.uk/ourguarantees).

### Planned changes to your supply.

When we have to turn off your water supply to fix leaks, connect new customers or make improvements, we will always aim to give you notice. For planned change in your supply, lasting more than four hours, we'll give you 48 hours' notice in advance of the supply being turned off and tell you how long we think it will last. We also aim to restore the water supply within the time we tell you.

If we fail to meet these targets, you may be eligible for a payment under our customer guarantee scheme. Find out more at [thameswater.co.uk/ourguarantees](https://thameswater.co.uk/ourguarantees).

As part of our programme to check for leaks, we sometimes purposefully turn off sections of the water main. During the day these interruptions are very brief and may be as little as ten minutes.

During the night they may be longer. Due to the way we have to do this work, which causes only slight disruption, we are unable to let you know first.

## Droughts

### Restrictions on water use

We have a duty to provide you with a constant supply of water that is suitable for domestic purposes, i.e. drinking, washing, cooking, central heating and sanitation. Exceptional weather conditions may reduce the amount of water we have. The examples below explain what we may need to do to save water.

### Temporary use bans

Temporary use bans (sometimes known as hosepipe bans) shouldn't be needed very often. These measures are only put in place when absolutely necessary to make sure there is enough water to meet the essential needs of our household customers. During a hosepipe ban, you can still water your garden using watering cans and buckets. You can find more information about using water wisely by visiting our website at [thameswater.co.uk/waterwisely](https://thameswater.co.uk/waterwisely).

### Reducing water pressure

This reduces the amount of water wasted due to leaks and bursts. On average, we should only have to do this once in 20 years.

### Ordinary drought order – non essential water use

Under the Water Resources Act 1991, ordinary drought order restrictions stop some non-essential use of water such as washing your car. Drought order restrictions, on average, shouldn't be needed more than once in 20 years.

### Emergency drought order – rota cuts and standpipes

Major cuts in supply on a rota basis and using standpipes, under an emergency drought order, shouldn't be necessary at all under our planned levels of service.

Household customers may be able to claim £10 for each day, or part of a day, that the supply of water for domestic purposes is interrupted as a result of emergency restrictions authorised by drought orders.

However, this will only apply in circumstances where it should be reasonable to expect us to avoid such emergency restrictions.

If payable, the maximum compensation entitlement will be equal to the average household bill in our water supply area for the previous financial year.

## Save water

### How you can help save water

On average, we each use 160 litres of water per day, that's over 1,000 litres per week. This is twice as much as 25 years ago. This means water resources throughout our area are seriously stretched with many available sources of fresh water for drinking supplies already in use. You can find out all out using water wisely at [thameswater.co.uk/save-water](https://thameswater.co.uk/save-water).

## New water connection

If you're wondering about the cost of connecting to our supply network, we can often provide a quick and easy budget estimate, usually on the same day. If you need more than one connection or have more complex requirements, you'll need to apply for a more formal quote.

Our website shows an overview of the process, along with details of our charges and how we calculate the total cost. Find out more at [thameswater.co.uk/developerservices](https://thameswater.co.uk/developerservices) or call us on **0800 009 3921**.

If there's a dispute about the charge, or if the time limit needs to be extended, you can escalate the issue to our complaints team by either calling us on the above number, or by writing to [developer.services@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:developer.services@thameswater.co.uk). If you're still dissatisfied, Ofwat, and in some cases an arbitrator, has powers to settle some disputes.

### Self-lay option: installing your own service connections

You can seek competitive quote from us and/or independent self-lay providers to install or 'self-lay' new mains and service pipes. We work with self-lay providers accredited through the Water Industry Registration Scheme, run by Lloyd's Register. Find out more at [thameswater.co.uk/selflay](https://thameswater.co.uk/selflay) or call us on **0800 009 3921**.