



Your Water Supply Domestic and Commercial Customers

Drinking Water Quality

Providing good quality drinking water is our top priority – our investment and operational performance have been geared to this end. Our drinking water quality is amongst the best in Europe and the strength of our quality control procedures underpins our constant quest for improvement.

The quality of our water supplies is monitored by the Drinking Water Inspectorate against the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000. These UK regulations are based on the European Union Directive but are in fact more stringent and cover all aspects of water quality. Chemical and bacteriological content of the water, its acceptability – colour, odour, taste and clarity - are some of the measures included in the regulations.

In some circumstances not every requirement of the regulations is met but only where there is no threat to public health. The Secretary of State for the Environment may allow us a period of time to carry out a programme of improvements to meet the required standard. These areas are described as having an “undertaking” for the given period.

We sample and test water supplies regularly and maintain records of these tests for each of our supply zones. A water supply zone is an area where no more than 100,000 people live. You can inspect these records, free of charge, at our offices. If you would like to know more about the water in your supply zone, please ring us on **01429 858061**, or write to our office at:

3 Lancaster Road
Hartlepool TS24 8LW

Visit our website at:
www.hartlepoolwater.co.uk

Water quality problems

If you report a water quality problem which we can't deal with over the phone, we will visit you. If we think the problem could affect your health, we will visit your home as soon as possible and in any case less than four hours after getting your call. If we think it is necessary to take water samples, we will

telephone you to discuss the results as soon as results are available to us and will, in any case, write to you with the results of the test within 15 working days. If we don't we will compensate you.

If at any time we believe that your water is unfit to drink, we will advise you not to use your water or to boil it before drinking or cooking. We will tell you through the media, or by writing to you, whichever method allows us to provide this information as quickly as possible. If you believe at any time that your water is unfit to drink, **DO NOT DRINK THE WATER UNTIL YOU HAVE SPOKEN TO US**. We can be contacted at any time during normal working hours on **01429 858061**. Outside normal hours you can phone us on **01429 858050**.

There may be occasions where we carry out planned maintenance of our water mains network where we will advise you to boil your water before drinking or cooking. We do this to allow you to use your water supply before you otherwise would be able to. However, if there is a need for you to boil your water for a lengthy period we will consider compensating you.

Discoloured Water

Occasionally the water you receive from us may appear slightly discoloured. Discolouration can be caused by iron sediment from old cast iron mains. Disruptions to the mains systems such as mains bursts can sometimes disturb these deposits and aggravate the situation. We regularly flush our mains network to minimise discolouration. If you receive discoloured water we recommend first that you gently run a kitchen tap for about 15 minutes to see if that will clear the problem. If not, please phone us on **01429 858050**. We can investigate and, if the discolouration is prolonged can give you alternative water to use. We can also help if discoloured water has caused your laundry to be stained.

If you are charged on a metered basis and we ask you to run the tap to clear discolouration we will give you an allowance against your bill. If your private supply pipe is

causing you to receive discoloured water, we will air scour it free of charge to help you resolve the situation.

Keeping up with demand

We will provide you with enough water for normal domestic purposes, that is drinking, cooking, washing and bathing, central heating and flushing the toilet. We do not expect to introduce restrictions for normal domestic use and certainly do not expect to have to introduce standpipes for your own use more than once in 100 years.

Using a hosepipe is not classed as normal domestic use but we aim to make sure you will have enough water to use a hosepipe if you wish. We do not expect to introduce restrictions but even if we did, this would be no more than once in 10 years. Watering the garden with buckets or watering cans would still be allowed.

Keeping the water flowing

We aim to provide a constant supply of water but some events will inevitably interrupt the flow, for example bursts in mains and failures of pumps or their electricity supply. If you have a problem, please ring us on **01429 858050** during office hours or out of office hours.

If, as a result of a burst main, part of your house should become flooded, we will arrange for the water to be cleaned up.

If your local supply fails, we will restore it as soon as possible. If there are serious problems, we will put a message on our switchboard so that you do not have to wait for someone to answer your query. If your supply is cut off for more than 8 hours, we will provide an emergency supply wherever possible.

Our target is to restore supplies within 12 hours for a minor burst main and within 48 hours for a large burst. If we fail to meet these timescales we will give you compensation. The amount of any compensation payment is set out in our Customer Charter leaflet.

Sometimes mains can leak without interrupting the supply. If you notice, particularly in dry weather:

- water running in the road or along the footpath or verge, with no obvious source;
- the sound of running water, again with no obvious source;

then please call our Leakage Hotline on freephone **0800 0284816** so we can investigate.

If we plan to interrupt your supply ourselves, to carry out essential work, we will let you know in advance and give you a time by which your water will be back on. If we expect the water to be off for more than four hours, we will let you know in writing at least 48 hours in advance. If we are carrying out major work we may have to interrupt the supply a number of times. We will tell you in writing about two weeks before we start the work.

If we send you a written notice it will tell you about your rights to compensation under our Customer Charter.

We sometimes need to carry out essential work during the night to avoid inconvenience. This will usually be between 11.00 p.m. and 6.00 a.m. In this case we will not normally tell you about the work. Please let us know if you think this could cause problems for you.

In the unlikely event that we have to interrupt your supply as a result of a drought order, you are entitled to £10 for domestic customers or £50 for commercial customers, for each day, or part of a day, that your water is cut off. This is up to a maximum of the previous year's water charge.

Keeping up the pressure

We must supply water at a pressure which will ensure it reaches the top floor of every building, unless the building is at such a height that water will not flow to it by gravity.

In most cases, you can expect that water pressure will be such that it will fill a storage tank at second floor roof level. In technical terms this is equivalent to a water pressure of 10 metres head at the boundary stop tap. In practical terms, this would allow you to fill a two-gallon bucket in one minute from a downstairs tap with the tap full on.

Pressure and flow rates in your home can be affected by a number of factors:

- the height of your property above the water main, and its height in relation to the local storage reservoir.
- the length and condition of the service pipe
- whether the property shares a supply pipe with other properties
- peak demand conditions
- your internal plumbing

We guarantee that in most circumstances the pressure in our pipes will not regularly fall below seven metres, although we always try to maintain a better pressure than the guaranteed minimum.

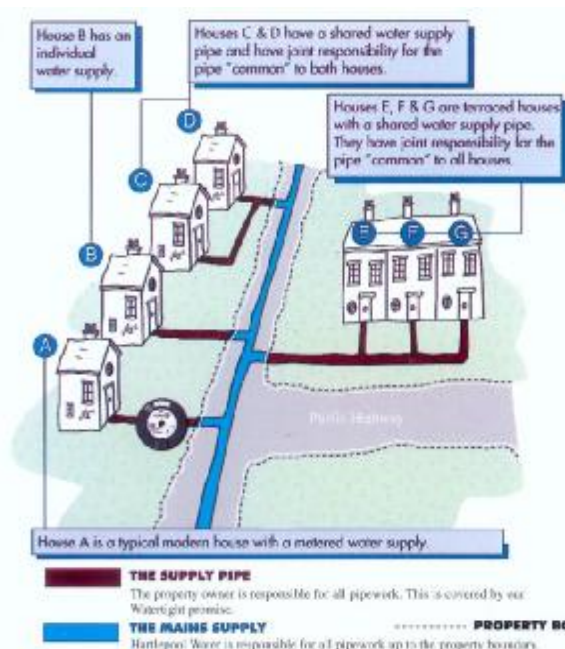
If your water pressure falls substantially below normal, please let us know. You can ring us on **01429 858050**. Once we have made sure this was not due to an operational fault, we will carry out some checks. Provided we can agree an acceptable appointment with you, we will visit within 3 working days to carry out these checks. If we fail to do so, we will pay you compensation. If our pressure loggers show that your pressure fell below seven metres static head for at least an hour on two separate occasions within a 28-day period, we will give you £25. This payment can only be made once in any financial year.

Where we carry out pressure investigations involving the excavation of your supply pipe at the boundary, we shall write to you with the results of the formal test within 5 working days. If we don't we shall compensate you.

Our pipes

Water is delivered to your home from the water main by means of a service pipe. Responsibility for the service pipe is divided between Hartlepool Water and you or the property owner. The division normally occurs at the boundary of the public highway and the property. It is normal practice for our stop tap to be installed at this point. All pipework from the water main to our stop tap is maintained by us and is called the communication pipe. Beyond this point it becomes the supply pipe owned and maintained by you or the property owner. The communication pipe and supply pipe combine as one pipe which is called the service pipe.

If you pay Hartlepool Water domestic charges, we offer our Watertight Promise. This is a lifetime service guarantee of your supply pipe against leaks or bursts, once the supply pipe is over 2 years old. This covers up to 25 metres of your supply pipe, providing this is no larger than 32mm in diameter.



If you need more information on responsibilities for your pipework please ring us on **01429 858050** and we will carry out a survey and advise you free of charge.

Your pipes

It is your responsibility to keep your supply pipe in good condition, just as you would maintain the plumbing in your house. If your pipe runs under other houses before it reaches your house, it is still your responsibility.

Shared supply pipes

If you share a supply pipe with one or more of your neighbours, the flow of water at your tap may be unacceptably low when your neighbours are using water. The best long term solution is to share the cost with your neighbours of having separate supplies installed. This is likely to give significant improvement and will also relieve you from the complication of responsibility for maintaining a shared supply.

We may separate shared pipes if:

- the pipe is in poor condition or can no longer meet the needs of the homes
- the houses are converted into a number of flats or homes
- someone has interfered with the shared pipe

You and your neighbours are responsible for the cost of separating the supply pipe.

If you disagree with our decision about whether or not your homes needs a separate service pipe, the Director General of Water Services can be asked to decide.

Leaks

Water is a precious resource and we are doing all we can to reduce leaks. If you pay Hartlepool Water domestic water charges, we offer our Watertight Promise. This is a lifetime service guarantee of your supply pipe against leaks and bursts, once the supply pipe is over 2 years old. Under the guarantee, underground supply pipes less than 32mm in diameter will be repaired free of charge up to a length of 25 metres. Pipes which run under or inside buildings are excluded. Where we need to repair your underground supply pipe, we aim to carry out the repair within 10 working days from receiving the authorisation form from you. If the underground supply pipe is found to be in poor condition or we have had to repair it before, we may replace up to 25m of supply pipe.

If a leak occurs on pipework other than the supply pipe, we will offer as much assistance and advice as necessary to help you trace the leak.

If, in extreme cases, the leak endangers people or property we can cut off the supply until the leak is repaired.

Sometimes a leak on your underground pipework can go unnoticed. If weather conditions are dry but in the vicinity of your underground pipes:

- there is a wet area;
- there is especially lush vegetation;
- you can hear the sound of running water;

then please call our Leakage Hotline on freephone **0800 0284816** so we can investigate.

If you pay Hartlepool Water commercial or industrial water charges, we will offer you up to 2 hours free work to help you trace a leak you have.

If you have a meter you will, of course, be paying for the wasted water. We have a code of practice on leakage, which provides some safeguards for you, and gives details of when we will make an allowance for lost water. You can get a copy by ringing us on 01429 858050, or by writing to us or calling at our office.

Preventing Your Pipes from Bursting

Your pipes are more likely to burst in cold weather.

- Your underground supply pipe must be laid at a depth of between 750mm and 1350mm in order to prevent it freezing and so minimise the chances of it bursting.
- The following simple checks will help to reduce the risk of your plumbing freezing and/or bursting in cold weather:

Find your main internal stopvalve and make sure it is working correctly.

Insulate over but not under any storage cistern or tank in the loft and insulate pipes in the same way.

Water fittings outside the house or in unheated areas should have a stopvalve inside the house. Turn this off and drain the fittings.

Repair all dripping taps and faulty ballvalves.

Try to stop draughts near pipes and cisterns.

Keep your home heated in winter if you go away, even if it is only for a short period.

Lead Pipes

Some older properties still have lead pipework and some lead could be transferred from the pipe into the water you drink.

Since October 2002, we have been treating the water to help reduce the amount of lead dissolving into the water.

If you decide to replace your lead supply pipe and all lead pipework inside your property, we will replace our communication pipe to your property free of charge at the same time as your work is carried out if you ask us providing that you give us 15 working days notice. If we fail to do so, we will pay you compensation.

If you have a lead supply pipe which you share with your neighbours and you agree with them to replace it, we suggest separate pipes are laid.

Electrical Earthing

You are responsible for making sure that all the electrical appliances in your home are safely earthed. Your water supply pipe should not be used for earthing your household electrical installation.

Many houses, particularly those built before 1966, still rely on their water pipe as an earth. If your house is one of these, please remember that the increasing use of plastic water pipes reduces the effectiveness of your water pipe as an earth. You should contact a qualified electrician for advice on electrical earthing.

The provision of electrical earthing is not one of our responsibilities.

Pipelaying

Where we need to lay or maintain pipes in your land we have the legal right to do so. However, we follow a Code of Practice. If you would like more information, please ring us on **01429 858016**.

Protecting water supplies against contamination

The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 aim to prevent contamination, waste and misuse of water. You can obtain a free explanatory leaflet by ringing us on **01429 858050**.

We have statutory rights of entry to domestic properties to investigate compliance with the Regulations, to take samples and to carry out surveys and necessary work. We will call at a reasonable time, except in an emergency.

You have the right to refuse entry if we haven't given you 24 hours notice of a regulatory inspection or a visit to take a water quality sample, or seven days' notice in all other cases.

Our staff will always carry identity cards. If you are in any doubt about the identity of a caller please ring us on 0800 0284816. We also have a special service for people who want to use a password. You choose a word which is known only to yourself and the member of staff coming to see you. If you would like to know more, please contact us on 01429 858030.

New Connections

We will connect any new property to the mains if we are asked to do so. This work can only be done by us or a third party we have approved to do the work.

You will have to meet our costs which will include:

- the cost of making the connection
- the cost of laying our part of the service pipe and installing the stop tap
- a contribution to our overall costs of making water supplies available. This is called an infrastructure charge.

You can get an application form for a new connection from our office. When we receive the completed form we will carry out a site survey where necessary and respond to you within 14 days. We will explain what you need to do before we will make the connection. This will normally include:

- laying your part of the service pipe to our specifications
- providing a separate supply pipe to each part of the building or premises that is to be separately occupied.
- ensuring that the Water Supply (Water Fitting) Regulations are complied with.
- obtaining any necessary consents from other landowners
- paying our invoice

We will then make the connections to the main within 20 days. This period could be longer if obstructions in our way or if we are restricted access by the Highway Authority. If we don't meet these deadlines and you suffer loss or damage as a result, you may have a legal claim against us. If we do not have a suitable existing main to connect your property to, you and your neighbours can ask us to provide one if it is practicable to do so.

You and the other applicants will have to pay a contribution, towards the capital cost of any mainlaying work, this being the difference between the income we receive from charges for water supplied from the main and our reasonable costs in providing the main, calculated according to a formula set down in legislation. We will also ask for some security from you before doing the work. We will then provide the main within three months of the financial conditions being satisfied and our agreeing with you where the connection will be made. If we fail to meet this deadline, and you suffer loss or damage as a result, you may have a legal claim against us.

Any dispute about the terms, conditions and costs for connection to the main can be referred to the Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat). The address is:

Water Regulation Services Authority
Ofwat
Centre City Tower
7 Hill Street
Birmingham B5 4UA

The leaflets in this series are:

- Code of Practice for Domestic and Commercial Customers – Introductory Leaflet
- Your Water Supply for Domestic and Commercial Customers
- Understanding Charges for Domestic and Commercial Customers
- How to pay your bill (including a Code of Practice on Debt Recovery)
- Living with a Meter (including a Code of Practice on leakage)
- How to contact us (what to do if you wish to complain)
- Code of Practice for Pipelaying in private Land
- Water Watchdogs

In addition, we have a leaflet which gives details of our current charges. You can get a copy of any of our leaflets, free of charge, by ringing us on 01429 858050. Or write to us or call in at our office:
3 Lancaster Road, Hartlepool, TS24 8LW
email: enquiries@hartlepoolwater.co.uk