



Customer Service Standards

Our commitment to **business customers**

As one of our 135,000 business (i.e. non-household) customers, you are entitled to know what you can expect from us in terms of Customer Service. This document gives a summary of the standards that we are committed to providing, whether you are a major industrial company or a small to medium-sized enterprise.

If after reading this you have any query or would like further clarification, please [contact us](#).

Contents	Page
Customer Service Standards	2
Water Supply	
• Water quality	2
• Discolouration	3
• Water pressure	3
• Supply interruptions	3
• Drought restrictions	4
• Leakage	4
Wastewater	
• Sewer flooding – response times	5
• Sewer flooding – internal & external	5
• Trade effluent charges – changes in circumstances	5
Services for Developers	6
Customer Services	
• Charges	7
• Billing	7
• Payment arrangements	7
• Account queries	7
• Incorrectly issued County Court claim	7
• Written complaints	7
• Appointments	7
• Meter testing and replacement	8
Contacts	9

Customer Service Standards

Southern Water is recognised by [Ofwat](#) (the independent regulator) as providing a high level of customer service in a wide range of areas including continuity of water supply, water pressure and quality, meter reading and account enquiries. We understand how vital this is for our business customers and aim to maintain it at all times. We receive more than 1.5 million customer contacts a year and we operate 3,000 works and pumping stations, together with a vast network of water mains and public sewers.

Specifically for our business customers, we are pleased to be able to offer a range of additional services including:

- [Water efficiency](#) audits and advice
- [Water Regulations](#) advice and inspection
- [Land searches](#), commercial and environmental searches.

This document emphasises our commitment to you and details the minimum standards of service you can expect in our main areas of activity together with the action we will take and, where appropriate, any payment we will make if we don't deliver on our promises. The appropriate amount will normally be credited to your water services account unless that is already in credit, in which case we will send you a cheque.

Water Supply

Water quality

The quality of water supplied to our customers is monitored by carrying out random sampling at customers' properties and analysis of the samples as required to comply with the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000. Data for these samples is assessed by the Drinking Water Inspectorate to ensure that compliance with the Regulations is maintained. The results for all samples taken are maintained on a public register which is available for customers [to view](#).

In 2008, over 130,000 analyses were undertaken, and an overall compliance of 99.95% was achieved.

In addition to the monitoring at customers' properties, water quality is also measured at our own treatment works and service reservoirs. Quality at treatment works is subject to continuous monitoring which includes automatic shutdown facilities to ensure that, in the event of any failure in the treatment process, no detriment is caused to the quality of the water going into the public supply.

We act immediately if we discover a quality problem in your water supply. If you complain about our water making you ill, we will contact you within two hours of receiving the complaint, provided we have a contact telephone number. However, if your complaint relates to another water quality matter, we will contact you within one working day. If we fail to meet these timescales, you will automatically receive a payment of £50.

After sampling the water at your premises we will telephone the results to you within 48 hours for basic water quality tests, if you have given us a contact number. For those occasions where, due to regulatory requirements, we need to do more complex analysis,

we will confirm our findings in writing within 10 days. If we fail to meet these timescales, we will make a payment of £50.

In the unlikely event that we have to issue a boil notice because of a water contamination problem, we will make an individual assessment – in consultation with you – regarding the provision of an alternative water supply. Since each business will have different requirements for drinking water, the impact of such an incident will vary and each case will be individually considered having regard to the specific circumstances that apply.

Discolouration

Very occasionally you may find that your water supply is discoloured. This could be due to work being carried out on older cast iron mains and, although unsightly, poses no health risk. In most cases, water will become clear after running off the standing water for a few minutes. If you still have concerns after doing that, you can contact us to report it and, where appropriate, we will offer you further advice.

Water pressure

We will give advance notice of any significant planned pressure changes due, for example, to temporary re-zoning of supplies linked to major water mains work.

Very occasionally you may experience a drop in your water pressure. If, through our fault, the pressure in the communication pipe falls below 7m static head (approximately 10lbs/sq in.) for more than one hour on two occasions within a 28-day period, you can claim £50. As it can be difficult to identify all properties affected by low water pressure, you are advised to make a claim to ensure you receive this compensation. Therefore all claims must be made in writing within three months of the later of the two occasions.

Supply Interruptions

Planned: If we have to carry out planned work which involves interrupting your water supply for more than 4 hours, we will give you at least 48 hours' advance notice of when the interruption will happen and tell you when we expect the supply to be restored. This will normally be within 12 hours (or 48 hours in the case of a strategic main).

Unplanned: Clearly we cannot notify you before an unplanned interruption such as a burst, but we aim to restore your supply within 12 hours (or 48 hours in the case of a strategic main).

If we fail to meet any of the above guarantees for either planned or unplanned interruptions, you will receive an automatic payment of £50. If an unplanned interruption extends beyond the appropriate period stated above, we will automatically pay you £50 plus £25 for each additional period of 24 hours during which the interruption continues.

Drought restrictions

Where your water supply is interrupted or cut off under the authority of a drought order issued by us, we will pay you £50 per day. However, no payment is made where circumstances are so exceptional that the Company could not reasonably avoid restrictions.

The maximum amount payable will be limited to your total water supply charges for the previous year, excluding the charges for any supplies provided solely for non-domestic purposes (see note 1). If you have not previously received a bill from us, the payment is limited to £500.

Leakage

The underground pipe taking water from our main to your private stop valve is called a **service pipe**. A service pipe has two parts:

- That part of the service pipe for which we are responsible is called the **communication pipe** and runs from our main to the boundary of the public highway in which the main is laid
- That part of the service pipe for which you are responsible is called the **supply pipe** and runs from the highway boundary to your private stop valve.

Where, our main and/or part of the service pipe is laid other than in a public highway or your private property, we can advise you the limits of responsibility.

It is our responsibility to repair any leak on the communication pipe or in the immediate vicinity of the meter. If the leak is on your private supply network, Southern Water will provide three hours' free leakage detection work to help locate where the leak is. In addition, dependent upon the size of the problem, we can also provide a fully comprehensive leakage survey and repair service at competitive rates. This includes the services of a dedicated project manager. Alternatively, you may prefer to engage the services of your own contractor.

We will consider making an adjustment to your wastewater volumetric charges following receipt of written confirmation from you that a water leak has been repaired and provided you can demonstrate that none of the leaked water returned to the public sewer. The period for which any allowance would be given normally starts with that covered by the bill immediately prior to the leak being repaired and ends with that covered by the first bill following the date of repair. No adjustment will be considered in respect of water supply charges.

Note 1: An example of this type of supply is one provided for production processes only.

Wastewater

Sewer flooding – response times

Normally we will respond to a complaint of sewer flooding within two hours of the first report of flooding entering a property (internal) and within 4 hours if flooding is outside a property (externally). We will also provide a full clean up service where possible within 12 hours (internal flooding) or within 24 hours (external flooding).

Sewer flooding – internal & external

If your premises are internally flooded due to a failure of our drainage system, we will compensate you with an amount equivalent to your annual sewerage charges - £150 minimum, up to a maximum of £1,000 for each incident.

We will write to you within 20 working days of the incident enclosing details of your compensation and informing you of any action we plan to take and any investigations we intend to carry out.

If we fail to either send you a refund cheque or credit your account, you will be entitled to an additional compensation of £50.

If your property is externally flooded, on receipt of your claim (you can find the claim form on our website www.southernwater.co.uk), we will compensate you with an amount equivalent to half your annual sewerage charges - £75 minimum, to a maximum of £500 for each incident. You will need to make a claim within 3 months of the incident and provide information to prove you were materially affected by the flooding incident.

We will write to you within 20 working days of receiving your substantiated claim enclosing details of your compensation.

If we fail to either send you a refund cheque or credit your account, you will be entitled to an additional compensation of £50.

If you experience internal and external flooding in one incident, the compensation payment you are entitled will be calculated based on internal flooding.

A payment under this section will not be made if:

- The flooding happened because of exceptional weather conditions or industrial action on the part of Southern Water staff
- The flooding was caused by your actions or any defect, blockage or inadequacy of private sewers, council or highway drains
- You notified us more than three months after your property was flooded.

Trade effluent charges – change in circumstances

A yearly rolling average is commonly used to assess the strength of a trade effluent discharge for monthly and quarterly billed customers. Where a change in the process results in a significant alteration of effluent strength and it is no longer appropriate to use the rolling average strength, we will review the situation with you at the earliest opportunity to agree the methodology for assessing future charges.

Services for Developers

Enquiries

[General enquiries](#) may be made by telephone or in writing. We will respond to written enquiries within ten working days.

Self-lay water mains

Guidance on the requirements from the initial application and proposals through to entering into a formal agreement and completion of the work on site, with subsequent adoption of the main by Southern water are contained in the current edition of the 'Code of Practice for Self-laying of Water Mains and Services – England and Wales' published by WRc (email request to publications@wrcplc.co.uk), also the Southern Water Company specific addendum is [available here](#).

Quotations for water service connections

Requests should be made in writing. We will provide a written quotation within ten working days – either as a budget estimate or basis of contract – once all the relevant information has been received. Guidance on the information required is given on the application form which can be downloaded from our website. Quotations are time-limited to three months.

Water main diversions and requisitions

We will provide an outline response and quotation within twenty working days. The turnaround time depends upon the complexity of the proposed works.

New water connections

Where reasonably practicable, new connections will be provided within twenty-one days, following receipt of your payment and a request for a trench inspection. We will notify you in the event that an external factor prevents that happening.

Applications for sewer connections

We will respond within twenty-one days to all applications for the connection of a new drain or sewer to the existing sewerage network.

You can find the application forms and guidance note [here](#).

Requests for sewer adoption

Guidance on submitting requests is contained within the current edition of 'Sewers for Adoption, a design and construction guide for developers' available from WRc (e-mail request to: publications@wrcplc.co.uk). We will notify you within ten working days if anything is missing from your application, and provide full confirmation within twenty-five working days that your proposals comply with 'Sewers for Adoption'.

In the event that we anticipate being unable to meet any of the above timescales, we will notify you of the expected response time.

Customer Services

Charges

Water supply and wastewater charges are directly linked to the volume of water recorded on the meter since it was last read. Volume charges are per cubic metre (220 gallons) and standing charges are variable according to the size of the meter. Where your supply is unmetered, charges are based upon the rateable value of the premises supplied. Unless you have applied for and been granted a rebate, your wastewater standing charges will include an element for surface water drainage.

Billing

Bills are normally produced within 48 hours of us or you having read your meter(s) – which may be monthly, quarterly or half-yearly (see note 2). They are payable on demand unless you have previously arranged an alternative payment method with us. Where your supply is unmetered, an annual bill is produced shortly before the Charging Year begins on 1 April. This is payable either in full in advance or by two half-yearly instalments.

Payment arrangements

You can pay by cheque, by debit / credit card (via our automated telephone service or on-line via our website), by Direct Debit (except where your business is VAT registered), or BACS. If we are unable to meet a request to change your payment method or frequency, we will notify you within five working days of receiving your request. If we fail to meet this standard, we will either send you a £50 payment or credit your account with £50.

Account queries

We aim to respond to written queries within five working days and notify you of any necessary adjustments to your account. If we fail to respond to you within ten working days of receiving your query, we will either send you a £50 payment or credit your account with £50.

Incorrectly issued County Court claims

If we incorrectly issue a County Court claim against you in respect of a debt for which you are not liable, and for which you have previously informed us that you are not liable, we will correct the situation, withdraw the fees and costs and we will either send you a £100 payment or credit your account with £100.

Written complaints

We aim to make a full response to a written complaint within five working days of receiving your letter. If we fail to send a reply within 10 working days, we will either send you a £50 payment or credit your account with £50. If you remain dissatisfied with our response, you can refer your complaint to the independent Consumer Council for Water (London and South East) which represents the interests of customers. A leaflet detailing our [complaint procedure](#) is available on request.

Appointments

When we need to visit you at your premises and it is necessary for you to be present, we will advise you whether we will visit either before or after 1pm. You can then request the visit to occur in a two-hour period. If we do not keep the appointment as made, we will either send you a £50 payment or credit your account with £50.

Note 2: Different timescales may apply where you are supplied by another water company from whom we require their meter reading(s) to enable us to produce your wastewater account

Southern Water aims to meet all its appointment times. If we cannot, we will let you know at least 24 hours in advance provided we have a contact telephone number. If we fail to make the appointment or cancel the appointment with less than 24 hours notice, we will either send you a £50 payment or credit your account with £50.

Meter testing and replacement

Where we are your water supplier, we will read your meter(s) regularly and identify any obvious fault or problem. However, if you believe a meter is not recording correctly, you can ask us to replace it and have the original tested independently. A test fee (variable according to meter size and type) will be payable in advance. Where the original meter is shown not to be recording correctly within $\pm 5\%$ of the design specification, the test fee will be reimbursed.

Under any other circumstances, we will arrange for an urgent inspection of the faulty or stopped meter following which arrangements will be made to exchange the meter (where appropriate) within the following timescales, subject to any necessary supply shutdown notice periods:

- For mechanical (PSM or Helix) meters – within 10 working days of our inspector confirming the fault
- For electro-magnetic meters (generally 200mm and above) – within 9 weeks of our inspector confirming the fault. This timescale is dictated by the availability of meters from the manufacturer

Your account will be adjusted for the period of the fault based on previous consumption history or other reliable information.

Contacts

We hope your experience of dealing with Southern Water will always be positive and that your expectations in terms of service are consistently met. If you have an enquiry about your water, wastewater service or your bill, or are unhappy with our performance, there are a number of ways to get in touch with us. We will do our very best to address your concern quickly and efficiently.

Via our Website

You can contact us through our [online email forms](#).

By phone

General enquiries relating to charges and requests for information

0845 272 0845

24Hr Automated Service – voice self service (VSS)

0845 270 1508

Enquiries or complaints about water and wastewater services

0845 278 0845

Surface water drainage rebate request

0845 279 0845

By post

Southern Water
PO Box 41
Worthing
BN13 3NZ

By Fax

You can fax your enquiry on: 01903 535060

Consumer Council for Water

An independent body, C.C.Water (London and South East), represents the interests of all water customers in the Southern Region. For information or advice, you can contact them in the following ways:

By phone: 02079 318502

By Fax: 0121 345 1010

By post: London & South East
1st Floor,
Victoria Square House,
Victoria Square
Birmingham
B2 4AJ

By email: using the form on www.ccwater.org.uk