

Getting in touch with us

By telephone

0845 600 2988

Lines are open between 9am - 5pm

Online

www.thameswater.co.uk/customerleak

By post

Thames Water, PO Box 286, Swindon, SN38 2RA

This leaflet can be supplied in Braille,
large print or audio tape upon request.

You have a leak

Advice to customers fed
by a single supply pipe

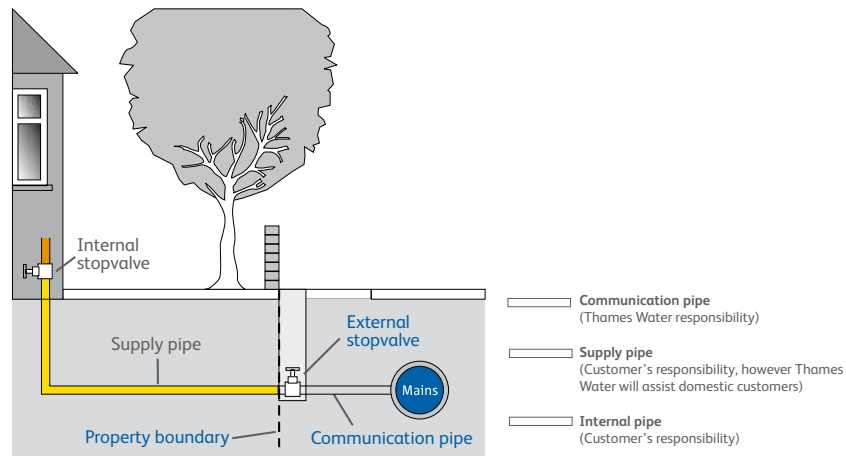
Important information
This is not a circular

One of our technicians has confirmed that you have a leak on your supply pipe. If left to run, the leak could cause damage to both your property and your neighbours' property, as well as increasing your water bill if you are on a meter. Leaks are also a waste of water, which is an increasingly scarce resource.

Your responsibilities

The owner of the property is usually responsible for the maintenance of the water pipe that runs from the edge of the public highway into your home and for all internal pipework and fittings. The diagram below shows a typical property and its underground pipework.

If there is a leak and it is not fixed, we have the right to repair the leak ourselves and charge our costs to the bill payer. This applies even if the bill payer is the tenant.



Repair or replacement?

The best solution in the long-term is for you to **replace** the leaking pipe. If you have a leak, it is likely that the whole of your supply pipe is in poor condition. This means that further leaks may already exist, or will happen in the future. In our experience the majority of pipes which are initially repaired, leak again.

Replacing your pipe from the outset will also minimise the number of holes that need to be dug on your property. Often contractors are able to 'tunnel' the new pipe underground between two holes when carrying out a replacement. If instead you have multiple repairs, they will need to dig at least one hole on each occasion.

How we can help

We can help you in three ways: (a) by subsidising you to replace or repair your pipe (domestic customers only), (b) by helping you find a qualified contractor; and (c) by adjusting part of your bill if you are on a water meter.

(a) Subsidies for replacements and repairs

For domestic customers, we offer a subsidy of £215 if you choose to fully replace your pipe between the edge of the public highway and your inside stop valve, or £95 for a repair.

This subsidy applies only to the first repair or replacement per property per owner. Therefore, if you choose only to repair a pipe and another leak occurs, we will not pay you a further subsidy. But if, for example, a previous owner has repaired a pipe, and you now decide to replace it, we will pay you the replacement subsidy.

If you owe us money and the debt has been outstanding for more than six weeks, we may credit the value of the subsidy to your account.

If you are a **commercial customer**, which includes landlords, we do not offer a subsidy but you still need to repair or replace your pipe.

(b) Finding a plumber

Thames Water will not carry out the repair or replacement for you: you need to make your own arrangements.

You have three options:

1 Insurance policy

If you have insurance that covers your water supply pipes (for example, Homeserve or your buildings insurance) your insurer may have its own workforce or be able to recommend a suitable contractor to carry out the work. Please contact them.

Otherwise, you will probably need to employ a plumber or contractor to carry out the work for you.

2 Thames Water Approved Plumber

If you need assistance in finding a suitable plumber, we can provide you with an up-to-date copy of our Approved Plumbers list. You can find the latest copy on our website www.thameswater.co.uk/approvedplumber or call 0845 9200 800 and we will send you a copy.

If you employ an Approved Plumber and return a copy of the TAPS (Thames Water Approved Plumber Scheme) certificate, we will not need to verify the leak has ceased before paying the domestic subsidy.

While we check that the named plumbers or underground workers are familiar with the requirements of the Water Regulations, we cannot give assurance on availability or guarantee work.

3 Own plumber

You do not have to choose a plumber from our approved list, but you should satisfy yourself that any contractor you appoint is competent to carry out the required work in accordance with the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999.

If you choose your own plumber, we reserve the right to verify the leak has ceased before paying the domestic subsidy.

(c) If your water is metered

If you have an external meter, the leaking water may register on the meter leading to an increase in your bill. In certain circumstances we may give you a 'leak allowance', reducing your bill. We have included a claim form in this pack, please read the terms and conditions and return it to us at the address specified.

If you are not metered, you do not need to return this form.

What to do next

You need to take action immediately.

Step 1

First, arrange for your leak to be fixed, as explained in Section (b) Finding a plumber. You have six weeks from the day the leak was proved in which to fix it.

(If we have not heard from you in this time, we will send you a legal notice explaining that we will fix the leak in accordance with our statutory duties. If we do have to issue this legal notice, we will no longer subsidise you to fix the leak. We will also look to recover reasonable costs from you in these circumstances.)

Step 2

Once your contractor has fixed the leak, fill in the Leak fixed form at the back of this pack. This tells us that you have fixed the leak. Whether you are a domestic or a commercial customer, you must return this form.

If you are eligible for a subsidy, returning this form also lets us arrange for your subsidy to be paid. We aim to pay the subsidy within 10 working days from receipt of the form if you used an Approved Plumber. Customers who found their own plumber will receive the subsidy up to 1 week later as we will visit the site to carry out an inspection first. If we find that there is still a leak we will contact you, no subsidy will be paid until the leak is resolved.

Step 3

If you are on a water meter, you will also need to return the Leak Allowance form, and return it to us (not less than two weeks) after the leak is fixed. If you fill in a meter reading on the day the leak is fixed, and again just before you return the form, we can calculate how much water has been wasted by the leak and will adjust your bill accordingly.

If you are having problems reading your meter, please call us on 0845 9200 888 and we will arrange for one of our representatives to take a reading for you.

Questions and Answers

I will have trouble paying to fix my leak – what can I do?

If you are going to have difficulty paying for this work because your household is in receipt of a Government means tested benefit, we may be able to help you. The qualifying benefits are Full Council Tax Benefit; Income Support; Income Based Job Seeker's Allowance; the Working Tax Credit; The Child Tax Credit (except families in receipt of the family element only); and Pension Credit. Please note, you will need to provide evidence of your income and the specific benefits received before receiving any assistance. No other benefits will be considered. Please call us on 0845 600 2988 if you would like to discuss further.

Part of my pipe goes under someone else's land – what do I need to do?

You will need to get their permission before you undertake the repairs. You should discuss this with your contractor and your neighbour before starting work.

I'm not going to be able to fix my pipes within six weeks because I'm going on holiday. What will you do?

We will take special circumstances into account on a case-by-case basis, aiming to be sensible rather than rigid. Please contact us on 0845 600 2988.

What happens if I am not satisfied with the quality of the repair/replacement?

The contract is between yourselves and the contractor you employed to carry out the work, therefore you need to discuss the issue with them. If you have feedback relating to one of the contractors on our Approved Plumbers Scheme we would like to hear about it. Please email approved.plumbers@thameswater.co.uk or write to Thames Water Utilities, Approved Plumber Scheme, Ashford Water Treatment Works, Staines Road West, Ashford Common, Middlesex, TW15 1RU.

How will the subsidy be paid to me?

We will send you a cheque in the post. We aim to send the cheque to customers who employed an Approved Plumber within 10 working days from receipt of the Leak fixed form. Customers who found their own plumber will receive the cheque up to 1 week later as we will visit the site to carry out an inspection first.

Why is the subsidy for a repair lower than for a replacement?

Replacing pipe is better for everyone in the long run, so we want to encourage our customers to install brand new pipes rather than patching up old ones. Also, the typical cost of a repair is less than that for a full replacement, and the subsidy levels reflect that.

I have already had a subsidised repair on my pipe and now another leak has broken out - do I qualify for another subsidy?

No - the subsidy is payable on your first leak only. However, if the first leak was repaired for free under the previous policy, we will subsidise you if you decide to replace the entire pipe.

Leak Fixed Form
Leak Allowance Form
Pre-paid reply envelope

to be inserted in the back page/flap

Inside back page flap red line not to print

Important notes

Legal powers

It is an offence under section 73 of the Water Industry Act 1991 for the person who is the owner or occupier of any premises to waste water intentionally or negligently. You have six weeks to inform us that you have fixed the leak. If you do not do this, Thames Water will serve notice on you under Section 75 of the Water Industry Act 1991. This allows us to enter your property and make the repair ourselves. Should it be necessary to do this, you will be charged the full cost of the work.

Safety message

If your property uses a metal water supply pipe as a means of earthing, this is no longer regarded as safe and has been prohibited since 1966. Properties built before this date may still be earthed this way. Work to fix a leak may make such existing systems unsuitable for this purpose.

We strongly advise that you contact your electricity supplier or an approved electrician. They may recommend that you have your earthing checked and may charge you for this service.

We would emphasise that earthing a property is an essential safety measure and is the responsibility of the property owner. We cannot accept legal liability for damage or injury resulting from the use of a water supply as an electrical earth.