



Dŵr Cymru  
Welsh Water

# Private Leaks

What you  
need to do



[dwrcymru.com](http://dwrcymru.com)





## Help for customers

We understand that having a leak can be worrying and we want to make life easier by providing all the advice you need in this booklet.

Water is a valuable resource and costs a lot of money to take from rivers, store in reservoirs, treat and deliver to you. We're really keen to work with you so that leaks are fixed as soon as possible.





## Who owns what?

It's easy to assume that any leak is Welsh Water's responsibility to fix – after all, we do supply your water. In most cases, we own the water pipes up to the boundary of the street in which they are laid. This usually, but not always, includes a stop tap. We will always repair any leaks on this part of the pipe work.

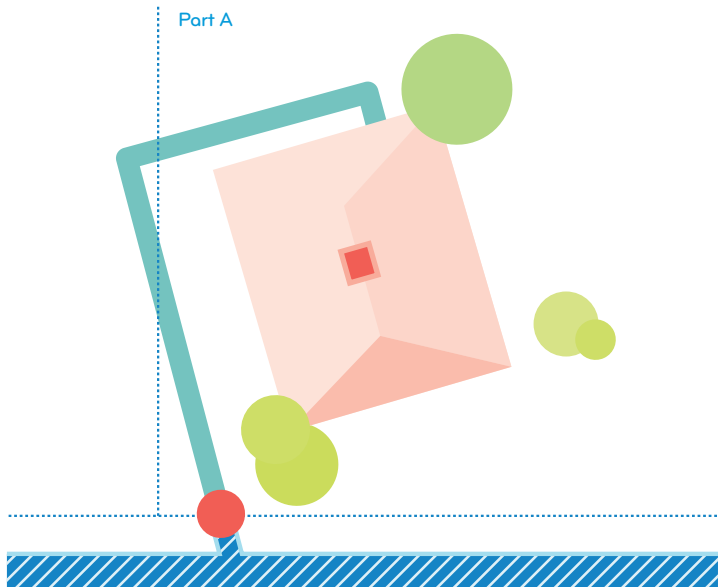
You (or your landlord) own and are responsible for the pipe that runs from the boundary into your property. This is called your 'supply pipe' – see part A of the diagram. It can run underneath your drive, path or garden and because it's underground it won't always be obvious when something is wrong.

Sometimes your supply pipe can be quite long and cross someone else's property and you (or your landlord) are also responsible for this bit of the pipe.

A supply pipe can provide water to several properties – see part B of the diagram below – and in these cases the responsibility and costs for maintenance and repair are shared between all the property owners.

### Key

-  Property owner/landlord responsibility
-  Our responsibility
-  Property boundary
-  Stop Tap location





## Do you share your supply pipe with your neighbours?

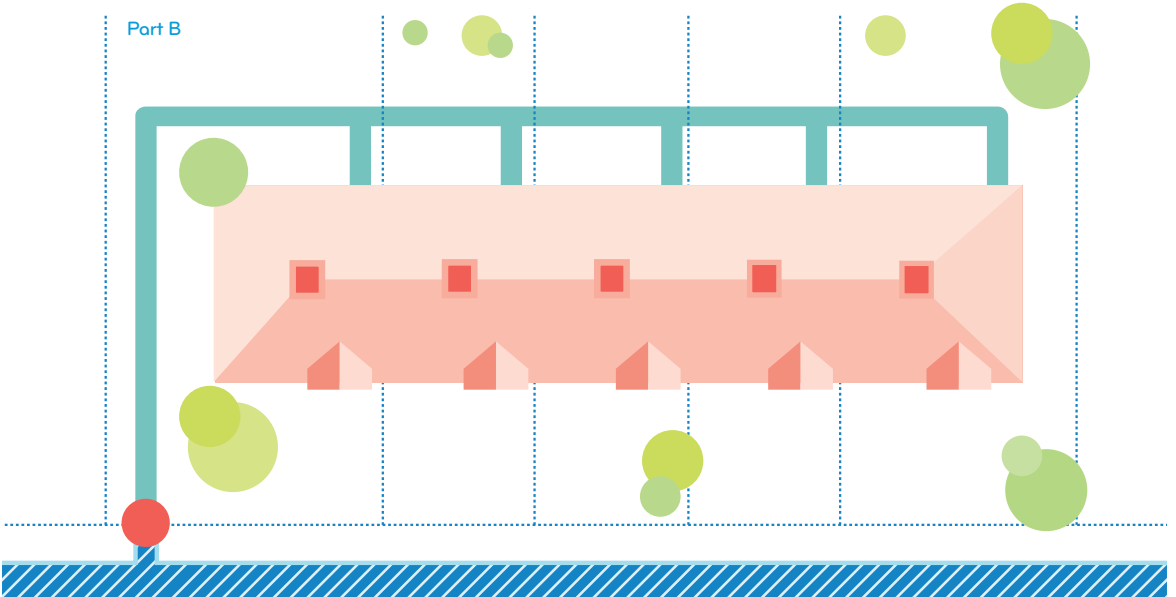
Sometimes this can be challenging as you and your neighbours equally share the responsibility for the maintenance and repair costs of the supply pipe regardless of the leak location.

If we find your water pipe is shared we'll discuss all options with you and any other owners when we visit. You will likely need to discuss the situation and agree solutions with your neighbours.

You may be interested in having your own separate water pipe installed, which we would always recommend.

If you get your water through a shared private supply pipe and there is a leak on any part of it, we may ask everyone who is connected to it to install new, individual supply pipes.

Part B





## What you need to do

Leaks don't just waste water – they can also damage properties and gardens and impact the environment. Here's what to do:

### 1. If you're a tenant

Speak to your landlord. If you rent your property (from a local authority, housing association or commercial landlord), we suggest you contact them straight away because it may be their responsibility to arrange for the leak to be repaired.

### 2. If you are a homeowner and occupy the property

If you own and occupy the property please refer to the section entitled "Free Leak Repair Scheme". We will do what we can to support you in resolving the leak the leak is likely to be but this will not always be possible and you may have to get work undertaken yourself or replace your pipe.

### 3. If you're a business or a landlord

Unfortunately we are not able to offer assistance to you under our free repair scheme. It is your responsibility to undertake the necessary repair and to then inform us when the repair has been completed. Please review pages 14 and 15 for more detail. We are happy to discuss your case, and will do what we can to support you through the process.

### 4. Check your insurance

Some insurance policies cover leaks on supply pipes, so check your policy – you may be covered. If you are, give them a call. We are happy to provide evidence to insurance companies to confirm you have a leak – we just need you to provide us with the insurance case managers contact details so we can send them a letter or email.

### 5. Find a private plumber

You may prefer to call a private plumber. Only you can decide the best plumber for your needs, but we recommend you use one who is a member of an Approved Contractors' Scheme, such as the WaterSafe or the Water Industry Approved Plumbers' Scheme (WIAPS). Have a look at our website, [dwrwymru.com](http://dwrwymru.com) for more information.

If you don't have access to the internet, you can contact WaterSafe or WIAPS direct on telephone number **0333 207 9030**.

Alternatively, you can find a local plumber by searching online, local community newsletters/magazines or you may find that a neighbour has a good recommendation.

### 6. If you have a water meter?

If you have a water meter, a leak could also increase your bill. However if the leak is on your supply pipe and you get it fixed within 30 days of it being identified, we will give you a one off allowance to cover the cost of the water lost through the leak.

### 7. Financial concerns?

We understand that leaks can come as a big shock to our customers and may lead to financial concerns. Whilst we can't help with the cost of the repair, there may be other ways we can help you save money. Further detail can be found on page 9 of this booklet.



## Free Leak Repair Scheme\*

\*Our free leak repair scheme is only available for customers who own and occupy their property; it is not available to properties that are rented to someone else or properties which are a business.

In some cases, we may be able to find and fix a leak on your supply pipe once every three years. Our ability to offer a free repair under this scheme depends on several factors. We may be able to help if...



The leak is on your external supply pipe



Your supply pipe has an outside diameter of up to 32mm



The leaking supply pipe is no more than 1.35 metres deep



The leaking supply pipe is no more than 100 metres in length



The leak is not on part of your supply pipe that is under your property, a wall, shed, garage or any type of permanent structure

Don't worry if you don't know the exact details. One of our colleagues will be able to check this for you when we visit.

In order for us to find the leak we may need to dig down to the supply pipe and carry out some tests. We will explain all of the steps we need to take to you. If we still can't locate the leak after our second attempt, you'll need to pay for any further investigative work and appoint a contractor of your choice to do this.

Our teams will use the equipment available to them along with their training and experience to pinpoint leaks but, unfortunately, this is not always possible and on occasion we may be unable to locate the leak. Where we are unable to support with a repair, we recommend you seek a second opinion on the leak location before undertaking works.

If we find that your supply pipe is in poor condition and likely to leak again, we may decide it may need replacing to a maximum of a 15 metre length. If this is the case, we will discuss and agree this with you first.

Our work is guaranteed for up to a year and is unlikely to fail. If the repair does fail we will, in most cases, repeat the repair free of charge, after that it's likely that you will need to replace it at your own cost.

If we have not managed to speak with you directly yet, and you believe you qualify for this free leak repair scheme, please give us a call.



## Making good when the work is done

Our repair team will be as clean and tidy as possible during the work but it is likely that the area will be wet and muddy. We will make every effort to return things to the way they were before but in some circumstances this may not be possible. At all stages we will discuss the process with you and inform you of any necessary longer term changes.

Unfortunately, we're not always able to repair or replace specialist surfaces. If you have a surface that's not listed over the page, we'll discuss with you what we can do before we start the work.

Sometimes existing surfaces may be damaged or broken when we're digging and carrying out the repair. We'll try our very best not to do this of course, but if it does happen, we won't be able to replace the damaged material. We will discuss what can be done, which could involve re-using the damaged material, or using tarmac or concrete instead.

We'll only put back the area we've dug up to carry out the repair. We can't improve areas around where we've previously worked that were damaged.

You can of course repair the surface area yourself, at your own cost. In this case we'll just fill the hole and leave the area safe and tidy.

We appreciate that this is a lot to think about and you will want to get the leak fixed as soon as possible. So if you think that we may be able to help, please let us know and we'll arrange for one of our colleagues to visit you and offer advice.





Here are some examples of typical surfaces we find at customers' properties, and how we put them back after we've undertaken any repair work.

### Bare soil or unmade ground

We will:

- Refill the hole and leave the area safe and tidy.

### Grass

We will:

- Remove the existing turf before we start work.
- Refill and re-lay the turf. You may need to water and maintain the grass following the disturbance.

### Trees and shrubs

- We may need to remove or cut back any trees or shrubs in the area in which we need to work. But it's important to know that we won't replace them. In all cases, we'll discuss this with you before we start any work.

### Gravel or shingle

We will:

- Remove the loose stones at the start of the work.
- Refill the hole with the original subsurface material.
- Return the original loose stones to the surface. You may see some soil mixed in with the stone due to the disturbance.

### Concrete or tarmac

We will:

- Refill the hole.
- Lay new concrete or tarmac over the area of the work. This may be a different colour to the existing surface as we use standard tarmac and concrete products.

### Paving (slab or block)

We will:

- Remove the slabs or blocks at the start of the work.
- Refill the hole with the original subsurface material.
- Return the original slabs or blocks where possible.



## What happens next

**A member of our Customer Supply Pipe Leakage team will contact you within the next 5 working days to discuss your leak. They will do everything they can to;**

- Support and advise you through the process of getting your leak resolved.
- Keep you informed on when our contractors will be out to undertake any work.
- Ensure that you have a direct line to a person who knows everything about your leak so that you don't have to speak with numerous different people across Welsh Water.
- Organise any revisits required to undertake inspections (i.e. if your pipe has been renewed then we'll need to inspect it) and arrange any work on our end (i.e. reconnection of your new pipe).
- Liaise with family members or external authorities to help our vulnerable customers (subject to agreement from you).
- Act as a point of contact for your insurance company should they require any information to support your claim.
- Ensure that, once your leak is resolved, we confirm that your supply is leak free so you don't have to worry.
- If you're on a water meter we'll make sure that all of the information required to adjust your bill is available. It can take up to 90 days to calculate and apply a leakage allowance – in the meantime, don't worry, and please continue to pay your bill as you usually would.



## More ways to help you save water and money...

Are you on the right tariff? We may be able to help reduce your bills with one of the following options:

### Water Direct

Our Water Direct scheme takes away the hassle of paying your bills. It allows those customers who receive certain benefits and are currently in arrears to pay directly through their benefits. It's the lowest available payment plan that we can offer. If you sign up we will reduce your bill by £25.00!

### Switching to a meter

If your fixed annual charge is high, or you are a low user of water or live on your own, you could save money by having a meter installed. Installation is free and many of our customers have already made the switch and found it works in their favour. If you apply for a meter you have the option to switch back to your fixed annual charge at any time up to 2 years from the date the meter was installed.

### WaterSure Wales

Our WaterSure Wales scheme is available to our customers who already have a water meter or opt in to have a water meter fitted. WaterSure Wales helps low income households who receive a qualifying benefit or tax credit where you either have a large family, or a member of your household has a certain medical condition that requires the use of extra water. Your annual charge will be capped for the year.

### HelpU

If you're a low income household and in receipt of a means-tested benefit, you may be eligible to receive support from our HelpU tariff to reduce your future charges.

### Customer Assistance Fund

If you have arrears with us that you're unable to pay, the Customer Assistance Fund could help. If you pay your current charges for 6 months we will pay off half of your arrears! If you then pay for a further 6 months we will pay off the remaining balance of your arrears!

### For when you need a little extra help

You may be a parent with a young baby, a dialysis patient, have sight or hearing difficulties or are elderly or disabled.

By joining our Priority Services Register you can get extra help with:

- Alternative ways of getting information.
- Bottled water if your supply is interrupted.
- Reassurance against bogus caller.

Call **0800 0520145**

Monday-Friday: 8am-6pm

Saturday: 9am-1pm

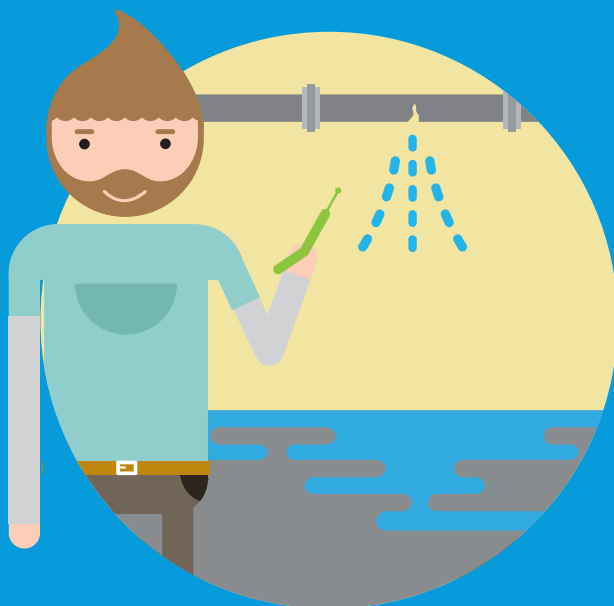
Or go to [dwrwymru.com/money](http://dwrwymru.com/money)

**Please don't ignore any problems paying your bills.** We may be able to make things easier for you.



## Checking for leaks

Hopefully once the leak has been repaired you won't have a problem again, but it's always worth checking. You can do this in a few easy steps:





#### If you're a metered customer:

- Turn off all the taps in the property and make sure that there is no water being used – or you can turn off your internal stop tap.
- Read the meter (where it is safe to do so) and take a note of the reading. Make sure you read the black and the red numbers.
- Take a second reading after 30 minutes, making sure no water is being used.
- If the second reading is higher, there may be a problem.
- Call a plumber.



#### If you're an unmetered customer:

- Listen out for a hissing noise or knocking in the pipework.
- Turn off the water supply at the internal stop tap.
- Check that no water comes out of the kitchen cold water tap when it is turned on (if water still runs, the internal stop tap could be faulty).
- If noise persists this could indicate a leak on the supply pipe.
- Call a plumber.

#### Keeping safe

If your property was built before 1966 you'll need to check your electricity is properly earthed. Get in touch with whoever supplies your electricity or an approved electrician.



## What happens if you don't get the leak repaired?

You may not realise but you do have a legal requirement to fix all leaks under the Water Industry Act 1991 (WIA 1991). If you decide to fix the leak yourself then you have 30 days to get it resolved. If after this time it's still not fixed then we will be back in touch to discuss next steps and see if we can discover what's causing the delay. Under some circumstances we will use legal powers to ensure that things are resolved.

Of course we really don't want to do this, but it's really important that we tell you what could happen if you don't repair the leak. We realise that there could well be a genuine reason for the repair to be delayed. In this case the best thing you can do is contact us and we will do all we can to help.



## The legal bit

You may not be aware that a water leak is classified as an offence under Section 73 of the Water Industry Act 1991 (WIA 1991). This means that if you don't get the leak fixed, we can prosecute you for allowing your water fittings to be or remain in a defective condition. The maximum fine is £1,000.

Details of Section 73 are provided below if you wish to read them:

*"If any person who is the owner or occupier of any premises to which a supply of water is provided by a water undertaker intentionally or negligently causes or suffers any water fitting for which he is responsible to be or remain so out of order, so in need of repair or so constructed or adapted, or to be so used that water so supplied is or is likely to be wasted or, having regard to the purposes for which it is supplied, misused or unduly consumed that person shall be guilty of an offence and liable, on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale".*

As we mentioned on page 6, leaks don't just waste water – they can also damage properties and gardens. This is why it's important to get the leak fixed as quickly as possible and why we have to set a time limit on getting everything sorted – 30 days from the date you were made aware of the leak. Section 75(2)b of the WIA 1991 gives us the authority to do this.

As such, notice is hereby given that you must repair the leak within 30 days of when you are made aware of it in order to prevent further waste of water. If the leak becomes an emergency, or the property appears to be unoccupied and the repair has not been carried out before the end of the specified period, we may disconnect the service pipe or otherwise cut off the supply of water to your property in accordance with Section 75(2)(a) of the WIA 1991.

It's important we let you know that as well as being classified as an offence under the WIA 1991, wasting water is also in breach of the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 which also has a maximum fine of £1,000.

If you do not repair the leak within the time we've said (30 days) then we may do the repair work ourselves and charge you for it. We would do this to prevent more water being wasted and to prevent the risk of contamination of the water supply.

Sometimes we may need to access to your property to inspect the pipes and fittings. Hopefully this won't be a problem, but if access is not permitted to the property, we may need to apply for a Warrant of Entry from a Magistrates Court. If any of the water fittings are found to be defective, we will serve you with an infringement notice giving you a set period in which to repair or replace them. If you fail to do so within the time limit you may be prosecuted.

We really hope that we won't have to apply any of the above, however we felt it was important that we let you know about the legal bits and what could happen if you don't arrange for a leak at your property to be fixed.



## How to get in touch

We hope you've found the information in this booklet useful. We will contact you when we've promised but if you've any queries you can get in touch by:

**Going online**  
(including Live Chat)  
[dwrcymru.com](http://dwrcymru.com)

**To talk about your leak**  
0800 052 0130  
*24 hours a day, 7 days a week*



You can also keep in touch with the latest news on:

**Twitter**  
[@dwrcymru](https://twitter.com/dwrcymru)

**Facebook**  
[/dwrcymruwelshwater](https://www.facebook.com/dwrcymruwelshwater)

**YouTube**  
[/dwrcymruwelshwater](https://www.youtube.com/dwrcymruwelshwater)