

Our Code of Practice

Water metering:
A guide for household customers



This leaflet forms part of our Customer Code of Practice, which outlines the services we provide for household customers. It has been produced in compliance with our licence.

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Introduction

Water metering: A guide for household customers

Many South East Water customers already pay for their water supply based on a water meter, and we have embarked on a major programme to install water meters for 90 per cent of our customers by 2020.

But you don't need to wait if you think you could save money now with a water meter.

This leaflet explains how water metering works and will help you to calculate whether you could save money by asking us to fit a meter free of charge at your home.

To apply for a water meter, fill out the form on our website at **southeastwater.co.uk/meters** or complete the application form and send it back to us at the address shown on the back of this leaflet.

What is a water meter?

The meter is a mechanical device fitted on your water supply pipe to record how much water you use.



How are the charges calculated?

Metered bills are issued twice a year based on the readings we take from the meter. Occasionally we may not be able to take a reading, so we will end an estimated bill based on your previous recorded consumption.

The charges come in two parts:

- *standing charge*
- *charge based on the actual quantity of water used and recorded by the meter, or on an estimated read*

You can pay in full when you receive your bill or in monthly instalments on a payment plan. Please refer to our website **southeastwater.co.uk/yourbill** for details of the current year's charges.

We measure water in cubic metres (1 cubic metre = 1,000 litres or 220 gallons), but just how far does a cubic metre go?

1 cubic metre =

13 baths

1 hour running a hosepipe

4,000 cups of tea

100 toilet flushes

25 showers

20 washing machine loads

Will I save money on my bills?

Research shows that customers who change to a meter use less water than they did previously, but every household is different and only you will know how often you use your washing machine, how many baths you run and so on. We have an online calculator to help you estimate the water use in your home to see whether your metered charges would be lower than your current unmetered charges. Please visit southeastwater.co.uk/meters

How much water will I use?

The following table gives you an idea of how much water you and your household might use in a year, depending on low, average or high use. These figures are based on the water usage of South East Water customers. We record your water usage in cubic metres (m^3) which will appear on your bill.

Number of people in your household	Annual water use in cubic metres (m^3)		
	Low	Average	High
	35	80	140
	75	125	190
	100	160	230
	120	185	260
	140	225	280
	175	245	305

$m^3 = 1,000$ litres

What happens next?

Fill out the form online at **southeastwater.co.uk/meters**, or complete the application form and send it back to us at the address shown on the back of this leaflet. We will then arrange to survey your property to check if a meter can be fitted. We will install a meter and start applying metered charges within three months of receiving your application. If we do not meet this timescale, we will adjust your account to ensure you are not financially worse off as a result of the delay.

I need to use a lot of water, what can I do?

Water Industry Regulations provide protection to low income households that are metered and use a large amount of water as a result of family circumstances or certain medical conditions. The WaterSure tariff is operated by all water companies and further details are provided in our Customer Code of Practice leaflet Household water charges, payment options and debt recovery. A WaterSure application form can be downloaded from our website at **southeastwater.co.uk/watersure** or you can contact us to discuss the tariff.

Where will a meter be fitted?

The standard location for a meter is in the pavement outside your property. When reading external meters our staff should not normally need to enter your home, but may need access to your garden or grounds. If we are unable to install the meter there, we will look for an alternative location which will usually be inside the property, immediately after the internal stop tap, provided:

- *the stop tap controls the water to the whole property*
- *there is easy access to the pipe and you agree to continue to provide access to allow meter readings and checks to be carried out safely*
- *there is sufficient space to install the meter away from electrical and other domestic apparatus*
- *you allow an external touch-reader or radio read to be fitted in an accessible position for meter reading*

You may choose to have a meter installed in a different location if you meet the additional cost of installation and the proposed alternative location also meets the criteria. In such cases, you must allow us access to the meter for reading and checking. When reading external meters our meter reader should not normally need to enter your home, but may need access to your garden or grounds.

What if a meter can't be installed?

It may not be practical for us to fit a meter at your property. This may be because the pipework at your property is complex or because there isn't a suitable location. In these circumstances we will inform you that we have been unable to fit the meter and will offer you the option of paying an Assessed Charge instead. Assessed Charges are annual sums which reflect the estimated usage of water of the premises.

The standard Assessed Charge is based on the number of bedrooms in the property. Customers paying an Assessed Charge who live alone can apply for our Single Occupier Assessed Charge by sending us a copy of their current council tax bill.

Customers living in a single room with shared hot water and laundry facilities, such as sheltered accommodation and houses of multiple occupancy, can apply for our Single Room Assessed Charge.

What can I do if I think the meter is inaccurate?

Water meters are very accurate and are manufactured and tested to a British Standard specification. If you think your meter is not recording accurately, please call us to discuss – high readings can be a sign that there is a leak, or a faulty appliance or fitting and we may be able to help with this.



We can carry out a simple test free of charge but if you would like to have the meter removed for independent testing, you will be asked to pay for the cost of this test, which is £70 plus VAT. We may prove a meter reading by producing a certificate of a person duly authorised by us to read the meter and certify the reading.

If the test shows the meter is recording outside prescribed limits of error, we will refund the cost of the test and amend the bills for the last two meter readings. More information about this is available in our annual Household Charges Scheme leaflet which can be downloaded from our website.

Can I change back to unmetered charges?

South East Water has embarked on a major programme to install meters for 90 per cent of its customers by 2020. You can apply to have a meter installed earlier than the date scheduled by the programme but you will not be able to revert to unmetered charges if the programme has reached your area or we are scheduled to install your water meter during the following year.

The current programme of metering installations can be viewed on our website at **southeastwater.co.uk/meters**

How to read your meter

We aim to read the water meter twice a year, so there should be no need for you to check it. However if you wish to read the meter yourself please make sure it is safe to do so and follow the below instructions.

Each meter has a serial number printed on the meter casing just above the meter dials. This serial number also appears on your bill to identify and confirm which meter has been used to calculate your charges.

The white digits on the black background represent cubic metres (m^3), and these are the ones that we use for charging. A cubic metre is 1,000 litres. The white digits with a red background are hundreds and tens of litres and are used for information only.

If your meter has been fitted externally you will need to access the meter chamber, which is normally in the footpath outside your property.

Inside the chamber you may see a foam or plastic disc that protects the meter from frost. Take out the disc to take your reading. Check also that the serial number is the same as the one on your bill. Once you have read the meter, replace the foam disc back in the same position that you found it and replace the chamber lid.

You should only check the meter yourself if it is safe to do so.

The meter we will install looks like this:

Water meter



Meter reading example

0 0 0 1 1 1 2 3

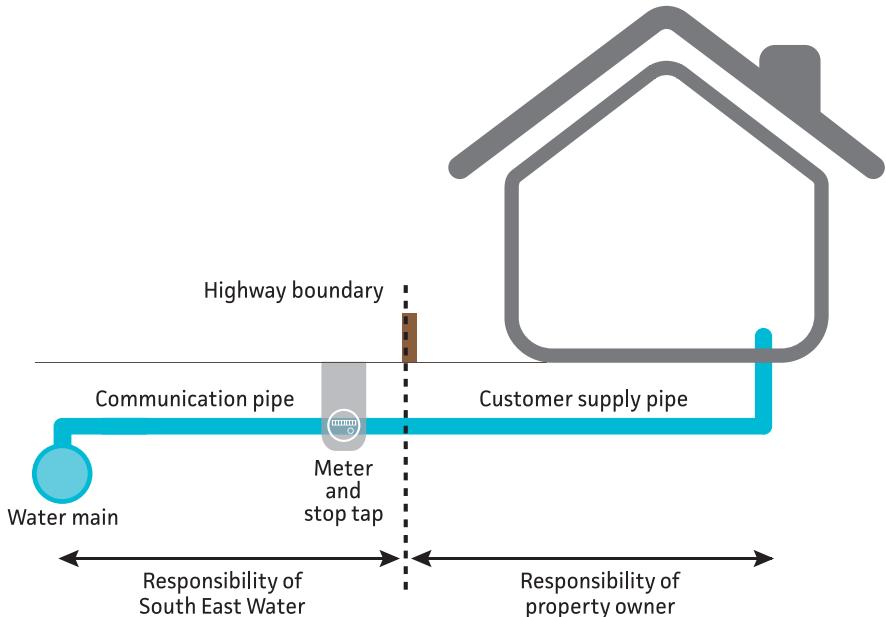
In this example, the reading is
11 cubic metres of water and
you would be billed for this.

Meter in position



Responsibility for pipes

You are responsible for the customer supply pipe which runs from the highway boundary into the house, as well as its repair and maintenance. If you have an internal meter fitted, the supply pipe remains your responsibility.



Checking for leaks

If you have an external meter and wish to make sure there are no leaks on the pipework you can:

- *turn off your internal stop tap, which will usually be under the kitchen sink*
- *look at the numbers on the meter dial and watch to see whether they continue to move. Customers should only check the meter if it is safe to do so*
- *if they do, it may mean there is a leak on your supply pipe. Contact us as soon as possible and we will investigate*

Visit our website for more tips on how to check for leaks inside and outside your property. We have a Customer Code of Practice on Leaks from customers' supply pipes, which is available from our website or by calling us.

Meter maintenance

We are responsible for the maintenance of the meter, so will need to check the meter from time to time. We will replace it free of charge if problems occur due to fair wear and tear.

You should not remove it yourself. This is because under the Water Act 1991 it is a criminal offence to carry out any works which require the disconnection of a meter, is likely to affect its operation, or prevent the meter from accurately showing the volume of water supplied.

Please contact us if you think your meter has been damaged.

Electrical earthing

Some properties, if built before 1966 and not subsequently rewired, may find the water supply pipe is still used as a primary method of earthing. This has not been viewed as a safe method for over 40 years and in such cases it is recommended that you contact your electricity provider or competent electrician to have the electrical installation checked for safety.

Any electrical earthing issues that the property may have will be pre-existing and are not caused by the water meter installation. Therefore South East Water cannot be liable for any electrical earthing issues that may arise.

Save water and help the environment

The south east of England is one of the driest regions in the country and increasing housing and population growth will make further demands on the amount of water available. It's important we use water wisely so there are sufficient supplies of this precious resource for everyone now and in the future.

It's very easy for us all to make a few simple changes in our daily lives which together will ensure we can have a secure supply of top quality drinking water.

Some of our top tips on saving water in the home and garden are listed overleaf, but more can be found on our website at **southeastwater.co.uk/savewater**

How we can help you be more water efficient

We want to help you to use less water, so we have a few great gadgets to help you do just that – available free. Once your water meter is installed we will send you information on a number of water efficiency devices you can order from us for free, including a toilet flush saver and shower timer.

For more tips on how to save water in the home and garden visit **southeastwater.co.uk/savewater**

What to do next

Simply complete the form online at **southeastwater.co.uk/meters** and we will arrange to survey your property to check if a meter can be fitted. Alternatively fill in the application form and send it back to us at the address shown on the back of this leaflet.

For more information about South East Water

Please refer to our website **southeastwater.co.uk** or the other Customer Code of Practice leaflets:

Exercise of pipelaying powers on private land

Household water charges, payment options and debt recovery

If things go wrong

Leaks from customers' supply pipes

Our Guaranteed Standards of Service

Priority Services Register: Our services for customers with additional needs

Your water company

The information we provide is intended to be accessible to all our customers.

If you would prefer this leaflet in an alternative format, such as large print, braille or audio, please contact us.

Additionally if your first language is not English we may be able to help you with our interpretation service when you call.

Contact details are on the back of this leaflet.

Customer Care

South East Water offers a wide range of tariffs, payment schemes and support to customers with additional needs or difficulty paying their bill.

For more information contact our specialist team on **0333 000 2468** or visit **southeastwater.co.uk/customercare**

Top 10 water efficiency tips



1. Take a short shower instead of a bath.

The average shower only uses 30 litres of water whereas a bath uses 80 litres.



2. Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth or use a glass of water to rinse.

A family of four could save up to £36 on metered water bills.



3. Washing with a full load.

Fully load your washing machine and dishwasher every time you use it. Each washing machine uses up to 100 litres of water and dishwashers 50 litres.



4. Only flush the toilet when you have to.

About one-third of the water we use is flushed down the toilet. If you've got an old cistern, why not fit a water saving device?



5. Fix leaking taps.

A dripping tap can waste more than 60 litres of water per week.



- 6. Make your garden water efficient.** Less watering doesn't have to mean less gardening! Why not opt for plants that don't mind going without a drink?



- 7. Don't leave the tap running to clean dishes.** Use a bowl of water instead. A running tap uses six litres of water per minute.



- 8. Ditch the hosepipe.** Instead of using the hosepipe to wash the car, why not use a bucket and sponge? A hosepipe can use up to 1,000 litres of water in an hour.



- 9. Order a water butt.** Collect rainwater to use on your plants and lawn.



- 10. Only fill the kettle with as much water as you need.** This will save both water and energy.

How to contact us

Our Customer Service Centre is open:
Monday to Friday from 8am to 7pm
Saturday from 8am to 1pm
We are closed on Sundays and Bank Holidays



southeastwater.co.uk



southeastwater.co.uk/contact



Facebook and Twitter: [@sewateruk](https://www.twitter.com/sewateruk)



Water supply and general enquiries
0333 000 0002

Out of hours emergencies

0333 00 00 365

24 hour automated payment line

0333 00 00 247

24 hour leakline

0333 000 3330



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