

# How to find and repair a leak at your home

Helpful advice on locating leaks both inside and outside your property



# We're committed to reducing leakage across the North West



**At United Utilities, we're doing all we can to find and fix leaks on our water mains as quickly as possible.**

However, more than 30% of water lost through leaks is from homes and gardens so it's important to check you don't have any leaks at home too as they could be causing damage to your property. If you have a water meter, you are paying for all the water you use so it makes sense to repair leaks as it's likely to reduce your bill.

The good news is that it's really easy to locate leaks in the home. Most leaks are often inside the property, such as faulty toilet cisterns or leaking water pipes or appliances. Some leaks may also be found on the pipe that brings water into your home.



**A faulty toilet cistern could be costing you up to £400 a year!**

# Finding a leak



**The first thing to do is find out if the leak is outside on the pipe that brings water into your home or if it's inside your property.**

## 1. Firstly, check your internal stop tap is working

In most cases you'll find your internal stop tap under your kitchen sink or downstairs toilet.

It's important that you can turn the stop tap on and off to complete all the checks in this booklet. To make sure the internal stop tap is working ok, turn it off, and then turn on the cold tap at the kitchen sink. The water will stop after a few seconds. If it doesn't, then you'll need to arrange for a plumber to fix it. Visit page 5 for details on how to locate a plumber in your area.

## 2. Is your water meter outside your home?

If your water meter is outside your home, for example under a grid in the footpath, you'll need to do a simple check to help find where the leak could be.

Firstly, turn off your internal stop tap, then check the meter outside.

If the dials, or digits on screen are still changing, then this

indicates there's a leak on the underground pipe between the external water meter and your stop tap. Find out what to do next on page 5.

If the dials or digits don't change, then switch on the internal stop tap and check the meter again. If the dials or digits start to change, then you have a leak inside your home. Find out what could be causing the internal leak on page 4.

## 3. Is your water meter inside your home?

If your water meter is inside your home, for example under the kitchen sink or downstairs toilet, then it's really easy to check if you have a leak.

Firstly, make sure you're not using any water in your home. Then, check your meter and write down all the dials or digits.

Wait 30 minutes and check your meter again. Have the dials or digits changed? If so, you have a leak somewhere in your home. Find out what could be causing the internal leak on page 4.



# Main causes of leaks inside your home



If you think you have a leak inside your home, don't panic! The good news is that it's relatively easy to find out the cause of the leak.



**Toilets:** modern push button toilet cisterns tend to overflow into the toilet bowl rather than traditional cisterns which overflow outside. Therefore, faulty cisterns are not always easy to spot and are nearly always the main cause of internal leaks. To check if you have a faulty cistern, dry the back of the bowl with a toilet tissue. After 30 minutes, place a new, dry sheet of tissue across the back of the toilet bowl. If the paper starts to get wet or torn after an hour, the cistern is faulty and leaking water.



**Taps:** turn the taps to ensure they are fully off and check for any drips.



**Behind the bathroom sink:** check the pipes behind the sink pedestal for any water trickling down the pipes.



**Shower:** check for any dripping water from the shower head.



**Under the bath:** if possible, check the pipework under the bath for any dripping pipes.



**Check your water-using appliances:** pull out any appliances that use water like your dishwasher or washing machine and check for pools of water or any visible water trickling from any of the pipes or connectors.



**Loft tank:** if you have a tank in the loft, check the ball valve to make sure it's not stuck or running constantly. Check any overflow pipes sticking out of the outside walls of your home to see if water is dripping from them.



**Garden tap:** check it's fully turned off and check for drips.

# Here's what to do next...



Once you've found the cause of the leak, follow these steps for help getting it fixed.

## 1. Check your insurance policies

Do you have emergency cover with your home insurance or have you taken out a separate insurance policy to cover leaks on your water supply pipe (e.g. HomeServe or British Gas)? If you have, give them a call first.

## 2. Repair the leak

If your insurance policy doesn't cover you for fixing leaks, you'll need to find the best person to fix it based on where the leak is. For example, a plumber can help with leaks inside your home, but you might need a specialist for underground pipe repairs. Take a look at the WaterSafe website [watersafe.org.uk](https://www.watersafe.org.uk) to find a qualified professional in your postcode area.



## 3. Let us know when the leak is fixed

If we have contacted you to tell you that you have a leak and you need to repair it as quickly as possible, then please let us know once your leak has been repaired. Call us on **0345 672 2999**.

## 4. Claim your leakage allowance

If you've got a water meter and the leak is repaired within 30 days of discovering the leak, you can get a one-off allowance to cover the additional cost of all the water that was lost during the time you had the leak. Once you've told us you've fixed your leak, we'll ask you to provide us with two meter readings, two weeks apart so we can work out your allowance (unless your meter sends readings to us remotely in which case we can calculate your allowance automatically). Or you can complete our online form at [unitedutilities.com/leak-allowance](https://unitedutilities.com/leak-allowance)

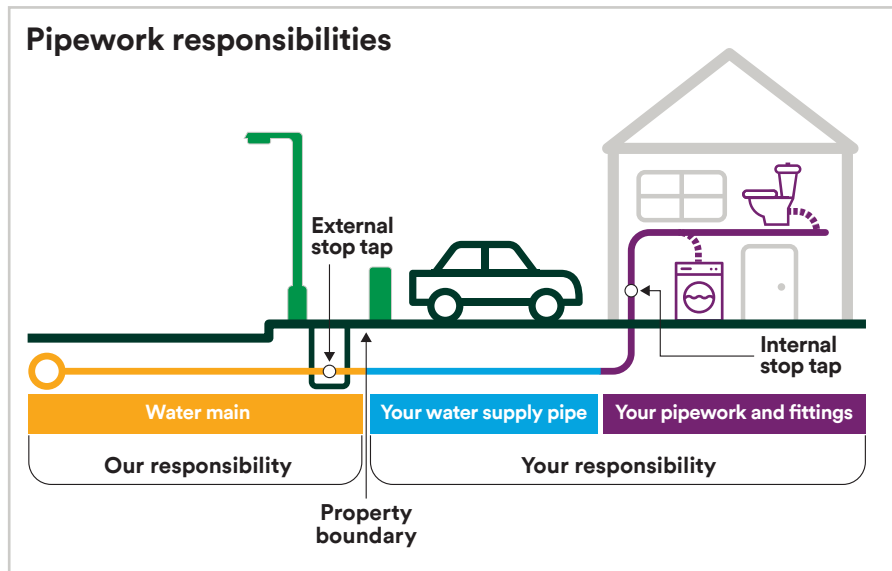
# Are you eligible for a free leak repair?



Legally, your outside water supply pipe is your responsibility to repair (see diagram opposite showing pipework responsibilities).

However, we may offer assistance through our private leak repair scheme if you are the homeowner and are registered for our Priority Services scheme, or you receive one or more of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit
- Income-based Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Support
- Income-Based Job Seeker's Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Pension Credit



For further details and to check if you are eligible visit: [unitedutilities.com/LeakageInformation](https://www.unitedutilities.com/LeakageInformation) or call us on **0345 672 3723**.

# The legal bit and other important information



The private water supply pipe to a property is always the responsibility of the property owner or occupier. Visit [unitedutilities.com/your-pipes](https://www.unitedutilities.com/your-pipes) for further details.

We're not responsible for the work carried out by any third party plumber or contractor. If your chosen contractor is planning to relay your external pipework as part of the repair, we'd recommend they start excavating at the property boundary or at your meter chamber and then work back towards your home.

If you share a supply pipe with your neighbours, you share the responsibility for the repair and maintenance costs for the pipe which supplies all of your properties.

If you're eligible for our free repair service (see page 6) we won't be able to fix the leak for free if it's under the property or another structure (e.g. a garage, inside a wall or outbuilding). You'll need to get it fixed privately by an underground pipe specialist at your own cost.

We can't accept liability for any loss, injury or damage caused to your property or any

neighbouring properties by the escaping water from the leak.

We may change or withdraw the terms and conditions of our supply pipe leakage policies at any time.

Whilst a private water supply pipe to a property is the responsibility of the property owner, it is our responsibility to:

- Minimise wastage of water and promote water efficiency, consistent with preserving our water resources to comply with our statutory obligations.
- Ensure the safety of public water supply.
- Reduce risks to health from contaminated water from customers properties as well as wider network supply.

Therefore, if the leak isn't repaired within 30 days of discovering the leak we'll start the Defective Water Fittings enforcement process under Sections 75(2) (b) and 170 of the Water Industry Act 1991. If you fail to carry out the necessary repairs within the period stated in this notice, we shall

## We're here to help

If you need more information or advice on what to do, please get in touch.



ONLINE:

[unitedutilities.com/contactus](https://www.unitedutilities.com/contactus)



CALL:

**0345 672 3723**

You can find further information on locating and fixing leaks at: [unitedutilities.com/LeakageInformation](https://www.unitedutilities.com/LeakageInformation)

If the leak isn't repaired within 30 days of discovering the leak we'll start the Defective Water Fittings enforcement process under Sections 75(2) (b) and 170 of the Water Industry Act 1991. If you fail to carry out the necessary repairs within the period stated in this notice, we shall take some or all of the following steps:

- a. Carry out the work ourselves and recover any costs from you.
- b. Consider appropriate enforcement action including prosecution under section 73 of the Water Industry Act 1991 for allowing your water fittings to be or remain in a defective condition. The maximum fine is £1,000.

If you have a secondary water meter chamber on your supply for billing purposes, you're responsible for the supply after the master stop tap as set out by section 46 of the Water Industry Act 1991.

## Other leaflets that may be of interest:

- Testing your household water meter
- A summary of our household charges
- A guide to our Priority Services
- A guide to using water wisely
- Support with your water bill
- Our complaints procedure
- Lead pipe replacement scheme
- Our standards of service

You can download any of our leaflets from our website: [unitedutilities.com/leaflets](http://unitedutilities.com/leaflets), or write to:

United Utilities, PO Box 459, Warrington WA55 1WB.

## In case you need to contact us:



### To talk to us about your bill:

**0345 672 2888** if you don't have a water meter

**0345 672 2999** if you have a water meter

For opening hours please visit [unitedutilities.com/contactus](http://unitedutilities.com/contactus) where you can also get in touch with us online.

### To talk to us about your water and wastewater services: **0345 672 3723**

Opening hours: for emergencies we are open 24 hours.

You can also call this number to check the identity of one of our representatives.

If you have hearing or speech difficulties, and use a textphone, please dial **18001** followed by the number you require.



### You can go online:

Visit our website and click on 'Live chat' to webchat with a member of our team or go to [unitedutilities.com/contactus](http://unitedutilities.com/contactus)



### Or write to us at:

United Utilities, PO Box 459, Warrington WA55 1WB



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[unitedutilities.com/myaccount](http://unitedutilities.com/myaccount)



United Utilities Water Limited,  
Haweswater House, Lingley Mere Business Park,  
Lingley Green Avenue, Warrington WA5 3LP.  
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