

The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999, The Water Supply (Water Fittings) (Scotland) Byelaws 2014 and the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009

What are they and how do they affect you?



This leaflet provides information about The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 in England and Wales, The Water Supply (Water Fittings) (Scotland) Byelaws 2014 and the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 and how they affect you.

What are the Water Fittings Regulations?

The Water Fittings Regulations, or Byelaws in Scotland, hereafter referred to as the regulations, are national requirements for the design, installation and maintenance of plumbing systems, water fittings and water-using appliances. Their purpose is to prevent waste, misuse, undue consumption or erroneous measurement of water and, most importantly to prevent contamination of drinking water.

Where do they apply?

All plumbing systems, water fittings and water-using equipment in all types of premises supplied or to be supplied from the public water supply come under the regulations. The regulations apply from the point where the water enters the property's underground service pipe. Premises without a public water supply connection are not governed by these regulations, although following the requirements of the regulations will help safeguard other water supplies in the same manner.

Who has to comply with the Regulations?

Owners and occupiers of premises and anyone who installs plumbing systems or water fittings have a legal duty to ensure that the systems satisfy the regulations. In most cases advanced notice must be given of proposed installations, so architects, building developers and plumbers have to follow the regulations on behalf of the future owners or occupiers.

Enforcement

The Government requires water suppliers to enforce the regulations. Water Suppliers can provide copies of their enforcement policies. Water suppliers will undertake inspections of new and existing installations to check that the regulations are being met. Where breaches of the regulations are found, the water supplier will require them to be remedied as soon as practicable.

Where breaches pose a risk to health, the water supply to the premises may be disconnected immediately to protect the health of occupants or others fed from the same public supply. It is a criminal offence to breach the regulations and offenders may face prosecution

How do the regulations affect you?

1. Your plumbing system must be installed and maintained to comply with the regulations.
2. You must prevent contamination of drinking water.
3. You must give advanced notification of installation work.
4. You will benefit from using an Approved Plumbing Contractor.

1. Plumbing systems to comply

Plumbing systems must be designed, installed and maintained to meet the requirements of the regulations.

Plumbing materials and fittings must be of a suitable quality and standard, as defined in Regulation 4(2). It is not illegal to sell non-compliant fittings and appliances but to install one would be, so check before purchase. Please refer to the Regulation 4(1)(a) guidance published by Water Regs UK for further information.

Plumbing must be properly installed and maintained to protect water quality, to ensure safety, ease of access for maintenance, detection of leakage, protection against damage or freezing etc. If you are carrying out your own installation work ensure you know what requirements you must meet. If you are employing someone else, consider using an approved contractor who will guarantee compliance of the new installation. The regulations cannot be applied retrospectively if a water fitting was installed in compliance with the Water Byelaws in force at the time. However if a water supplier considers a water fitting poses a significant risk of contamination or waste of water they can insist on improvements using primary legislation.

2. Prevention of backflow

Backflow occurs when water flows in the opposite to intended or normal direction of flow. Where water or water-using equipment is used with fluids or materials which could contaminate the water, there must be adequate protection to stop backflow of potentially contaminated water into other parts of the system, especially drinking water outlets.

The regulations define Fluid Risk Categories according to the type of contaminants which are present and specify the appropriate type of device or arrangement which must be fitted to protect against backflow.

3. Advanced Notification

In most cases, before any proposed installation starts, the installer, owner or occupier must obtain the water supplier's consent by giving advanced notice of the work. This applies to water system installations in connection with any of the following:

1. The erection of any new building or structure.
2. The extension or alteration of the water system in any premises except a domestic dwelling. †
3. The material change of use of any premises.
4. The installation of:
 - (a) A bath larger than 230 litres (measured to the centre of the overflow); *
 - (b) A bidet with an ascending spray or flexible hose; †
 - (c) A shower unit of a type specified by the Regulator (none are currently specified); *
 - (d) A pump or booster drawing more than 12 litres per minute;
 - (e) A reverse osmosis unit;
 - (f) A water treatment unit producing a waste water discharge or requiring water for regeneration or cleaning;
 - (g) A reduced pressure zone (RPZ) valve or other mechanical device for protection against backflow in fluid category 4 or 5;
 - (h) A garden watering system unless designed to be hand-operated; *
 - (i) Any water system laid outside a building and either less than 750mm or more than 1350mm below ground level;
5. Construction of an automatically-replenished pond or swimming pool of more than 10,000 litres. *

In Scotland and Northern Ireland, notification is also required for:

- grey water, recycled water, reclaimed water and rainwater harvesting systems.
- water systems for fire fighting, including domestic sprinklers.
- a flexible shower hose or other flexible outlet for use in conjunction with a WC. †
- a 'shower toilet' or 'bidet-toilet' where either as part of the WC itself or as an addition or adaptation of it, a stream of water is provided from below the spillover level of the WC pan for personal cleansing. †

In Scotland there is an additional requirement for notification of:

- Any system incorporating a private water supply.
- For notification, the following information must be sent to the local water supplier:
- The name and address of the person giving notice and, if different, of the person to whom the consent should be sent.
 - A description of the proposed work and any related change of use of premises.
 - The location of the premises and their use or intended use.
 - Except for items marked (*) above, a plan of that part of the premises which relates to the proposed work and a diagram showing the pipe work and fittings to be installed.
 - The plumbing contractor's name and address, if an approved plumber is to do the work.

Consent will not be withheld unreasonably, and may be granted subject to conditions, which must be followed. If consent is not given within ten working days, it is deemed to have been granted. This does not alter the obligation upon the installer and owner or occupier to see that the regulations are fully met.

4. Approved Contractors

An approved contractor, often called an approved plumber, will provide a certificate to state that their installation or maintenance work satisfies the regulations. In the event that this certified work contravenes the regulations, the owner or occupier can use the certificate as a legal defence against prosecution. Installation by an approved contractor of items marked (†) in the list above does not have to receive prior consent but on completion, compliance certificate copies must be sent to the water supplier and the person who asked for the work to be done.

Details of approved contractors who have demonstrated their experience of plumbing work and knowledge of the regulations and have liability insurance cover are available from the local water supplier, Water Regs UK and WaterSafe.

WaterSafe is an online national register and search facility that enables customers to locate an approved contractor in their area.

It includes approved contractors from all seven recognised Schemes operating in the UK e.g. WIAPS.

Where can I get a copy of the regulations and further advice?

For England and Wales, the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 and their Schedules are Statutory Instruments (1999 No 1148 and No 1506) available from HMSO and via <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1999/1148/contents/made>. A Guidance Document relating to the Schedules to the regulations is available on the Defra website.

Copies of the Water Supply (Water Fittings) (Scotland) Byelaws 2014 are available from Scottish Water or via <https://www.scottishwater.co.uk/business/our-services/compliance/water-byelaws/water-byelaws-documents/water-byelaws-2014>.

The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) are available from NI Water.

<http://www.niwater.com/water-fittings-regulations/> or via <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2009/255/contents/made>.

Water Suppliers cannot provide a design service for installations, but Water Regs UK offers a free technical advice service for general questions about the regulations and will try to answer queries from customers about local matters relating to the regulations.

Useful contacts:

Local Water Supplier:

Refer to company website or see the phone book.

Water Regs UK: (see below). The Water Regs UK website lists contact details for Water Fittings Regulations departments in all water suppliers.

WaterSafe:

Tel: 0333 207 9030 website: www.watersafe.org.uk

Water Industry Approved Plumbers Scheme (WIAPS):

Tel: 0333 207 9030 website: www.waterregsuk.co.uk

Water Regs UK,
Unit 13, Willow Road, Pen-y-Fan Industrial Estate, Crumlin, Gwent, NP11 4EG.

Tel: 0333 207 9030
e-mail: info@waterregsuk.co.uk