

Dealing with wastewater

Code of Practice

2026

Our codes of Practice

We operate under a licence which was granted by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. This means that there are many laws and regulations which govern what we do and the rights you have as a customer. Independent regulators monitor our business to ensure that we operate fairly. In addition to this we have introduced our own policies and services which go beyond our regulatory obligations.

This document sets out our Codes of Practice. It describes the services we provide, what your rights are as a household customer and what to do if things go wrong. The Codes have been produced in consultation with the Consumer Council for Water (CCW). From time to time, we will revise the Codes and update them to include our improvements in services to you. Nothing in our Codes of Practice affects your rights under the Law, nor is it a contract between the Company and you.

Dealing with wastewater

For the areas that we are responsible for, we provide and maintain a system of public sewers, which take the wastewater from your buildings and drains to our wastewater treatment works (WwTW). The system of pipes which carry the wastewater is called the foul sewerage system.

We also collect rainwater run-off from roofs, as well as from some roads and other paved areas, and transfer it to suitable watercourses and rivers through surface water sewerage systems. We are not responsible for any highway drains or a gully. For any issues you'll need to contact your local authority.

Your wastewater bill

This covers the cost of removing, treating and disposing of the used water from your property. This is based on the volume of water (using an actual or estimated meter reading) that your household uses. For most customers, we assume that the volume of 'water in' is the same as the volume of 'water out' for example the volume of water returned to sewer.

To work out the charge we multiply the volume of water (based on an actual or estimated reading) by the appropriate rate.

The unit charge reflects 'normal losses'. This covers water that doesn't reach the sewer because of things like evaporation from cooking, clothes washing, bathing, hot water equipment and garden watering.

Used water charge, as with the water supply charge, is based on the volume of water (using an actual or estimated meter reading) that your household uses.

Surface water drainage charge

Our current rates are set out in our scheme of charges document. If you can show that your property does not have any surface water draining to the public sewer, you will pay a reduced charge to cover highway drainage.

Types of sewers and responsibility

Types of sewers

The table below shows the types of sewers and drains.

| Type of sewer | Use |
|---------------------------|---|
| Surface water sewers | Carry rainwater which runs off roofs and roads into rivers, watercourses and eventually the sea. Flows may be attenuated using sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) to reduce the likelihood of surface water flooding. |
| Foul Sewers | Carry the waste from toilets, water which has been used for cooking and washing, and effluent from industrial premises to WwTWs. |
| Combined sewers | Carry both the rainwater run-off from roofs and roads, as well as water which has been used for domestic and industrial purposes, to WwTWs. |
| Lateral drain | A pipe that drains foul and/or surface water from a single property which is outside the boundary of the property it serves. Lateral drains are often under a public pavement or road. A lateral drain might run through the boundary of your property and even under your building if you share a sewer with your neighbour. |
| Private sewers and drains | All pipes within a property boundary that serve just a single property are referred to as private drains and are the responsibility of the property owner. All internal plumbing, roof drainage, down pipes, gullies and soakaways are also the responsibility of the property owner. |

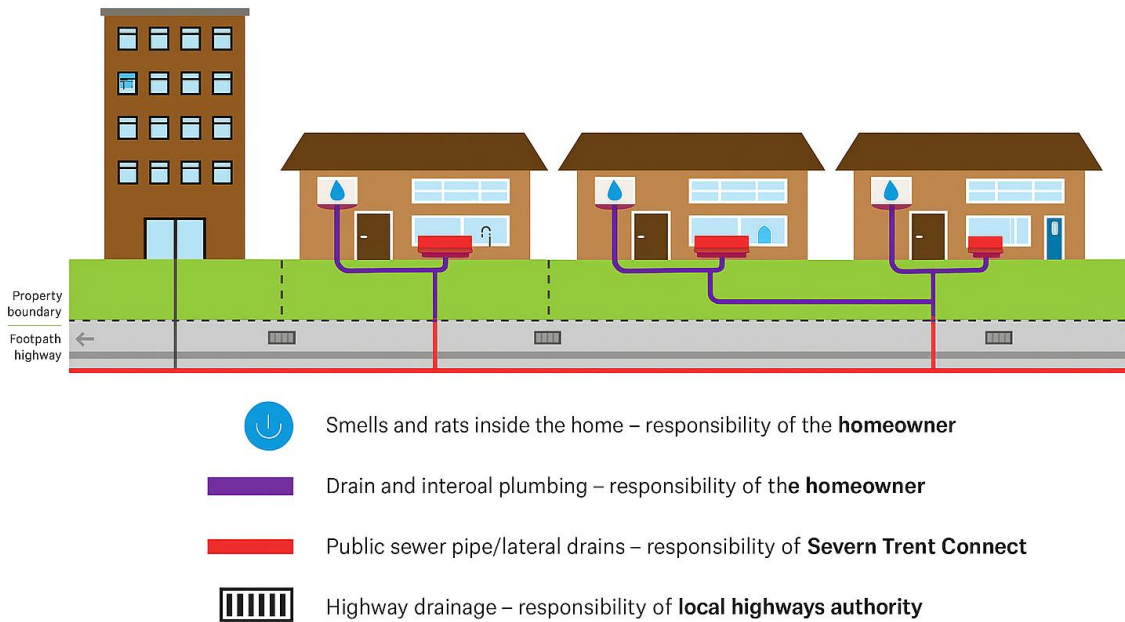
While most of our sewerage system flows downhill using gravity, in low lying areas we also use pumping stations to pump flows uphill to our sewage treatment works. Each pumping station has at least one pressurised pipe. These pumping stations vary in size – some will have large buildings while others only have a small control kiosk. All are powered by electricity and are installed with monitoring systems to flag up if a maintenance visit is needed.

Sewers we're responsible for

We're responsible for most of the sewers which drain buildings and roofs that serve residential areas and industrial complexes. We also adopt most sewers built as part of new development. Most of these sewers are situated under roads and public areas but can also be located on private land.

The diagram below can assist in understanding these responsibilities and shows the normal layout of most drain and sewer systems which applies to most property types. For ease, the diagram only shows a single system, but most properties have two separate systems draining them – one for waste water and one for rainwater.

Sewer pipe responsibility



What we're not responsible for

We're not responsible for maintaining road gullies, highway drains, land drainage, ground water, watercourses, culverted watercourses, or rivers. Where the performance of our sewerage systems is being unduly affected owing to interaction with other systems we will work with the respective authorities.

Maps of our sewers

It's our duty to keep a map showing the position of public sewers and you have a right to view it. Please send any requests to view sewer maps to customer@st-connect.co.uk

Sewer blockages

Commercial properties

Commercial kitchens generate food waste – plus fats, oils, and grease (FOG) as part of their usual practices, but if you're getting rid of it the wrong way, for example, allowing it to go down sinks and drains, then you could be breaking the law.

When FOG enters the sewer system through your sinks, or dishwashers – it can cause blockages in pipes that can lead to foul smells, rodent and insect infestations, sewer flooding, and pollution. We can visit your commercial kitchen to see how you're disposing of FOG in order to reduce the risk of blockages, floods, and pollution of the environment.

There are four key ways to help control the FOG discharge from your premises:

- Dry wipe dirty pots, pans, plates, and utensils into a bin – before they get washed in your sink or dishwasher.
- Use a sink strainer to catch food debris that might otherwise go down your plughole.
- Our advice is to install a correctly sized grease trap and maintain it according to the manufacturer's instructions. From experience, this is considered the most effective means of preventing harmful matter entering the sewer system.
- Correctly store used cooking oil and arrange for it to be collected by a registered waste haulier.

Legalities

There are several different laws that require catering businesses to manage the disposal of fat, oil, and grease correctly, including:

- Water Industry Act 1991
- Environmental Protection Act 1990 - Duty of Care
- Environmental Protection Act 1990 – Statutory nuisance
- Animal By-products Regulations EC 1974/2002 (ABPR)
- Building Act 1984
- Food Safety Act 1990

Failure to adhere to the legal requirements could lead to you being recharged for costs or prosecuted.

Recharging

We reserve the right to recover costs from businesses, contractors, and food service establishments (FSEs) who have misused the sewer under Section 111 of the Water Industry Act 1991.

Sewer misuse can be caused by the improper disposal of matter and/or fats oils and grease (FOG) into a sewer connecting to a public sewer which interferes with its free flow.

The impact of these environmental incidents can affect but is not limited to the following: the premises of the FSE, local communities, public areas, nature reserves, sewage pumping stations and wastewater treatment works.

Prosecution

Should any business fail to comply with restrictions on the use of public sewers, including instances of FOG discharging from their establishment, we may look to prosecute under Section 111 of the Water Industry Act 1991.

Domestic properties

Most sewer blockages are caused by wrong things being put down the sink or toilet - like wet wipes, sanitary products, vegetable fats and cooking oils. When this happens, it builds up over time, stopping the normal flow of wastewater, which might flood your home or garden. Our sewers are only designed to take away the normal contents of sinks, baths, showers and toilets, all other waste should go in the bin.

Clearing blockages on private drains

Blockages in sewers can result in smells, back-up of sewage, flooding, or pollution. If we receive contact from you notifying us of a blockage that needs clearing, we will try to establish whether the blockage is within our network or within the pipework that you're responsible for. If the blockage is in your pipework, this would be your responsibility to deal with therefore we won't send a team out as you will need to pay a drain clearing company to clear the problem or resolve it via your insurer.

Where we're unable to confirm the location of a problem through our initial questions, or where we believe the issue may lie within our own pipework, we will send a drain-clearing team to investigate. If they find that the problem is on pipework you are responsible for, they will let you know. You can then choose to use an independent drainage contractor to complete any required work, or we can offer to clear the blockage for you. A charge applies for this service, and you'll be given a fixed upfront price before any work begins. If you're unable to pay for the service, or would prefer to arrange the work yourself, we will leave the job at that point. Once our team has left, we will not be able to return later to provide this service. Please note that any work we carry out on your pipework is limited to restoring flow; we do not undertake repairs. If the pipework is damaged, you may wish to contact your insurer, as repairs may be covered under your policy.

Sewer flooding

Protection against flooding from public sewers

We aim to make sure there's sufficient capacity in our sewer systems to protect homes from sewer flooding.

Sewer flooding can also happen when pipes block, collapse or are affected by backing up when pumping stations breakdown.

Most flooding incidents caused by blockages are a result of the wrong things being flushed down toilets, such as wipes, nappies, and sanitary products, or where fat, oil and grease are poured down kitchen sinks. These then stick to the inside of pipes, solidify and restrict the flow in the sewer. These types of problems will often result in smells or can affect toilet flushing.

If you need to report a flooding problem please contact us via our 24- hour Customer Operations Service Centre (0845 555 5557). A full list of our contact details can be found on the last page.

Where the incident disrupts service or causes flooding to property, we will aim to arrive as soon as possible. We aim to attend within four hours but during times of exceptionally heavy rainfall, when there are a large number flooding incidents, it may take a little longer.

We will give you a named contact if you've suffered internal flooding, as well as more information which explains what happens next and our responsibilities. Our flood expert will get in touch to update you on the findings of our review and explain what happens next.

We're not legally liable to customers for loss or damage caused by flooding from public sewers unless we've been negligent. Our sewers are an open network so we can't control what gets put into them. If you're affected by flooding and it has resulted in loss or damage to your property, your insurance company should be able to help. It's a good idea to check your insurance regularly, because it's up to you to check you're properly covered. If your home insurance company believe we are liable for the sewer flood, they will contact us. As a matter of course we ask that any query comes from your insurer as they're best placed to make these enquiries.

We will make sure the problem is dealt with quickly and that we do as much as we can to help afterwards. In nearly all circumstances we will give you practical advice and support. We can carry out a basic external clean up e.g. disinfecting external affected hard surface areas, as a gesture of goodwill if you ask us to, as long as it can be done without contaminating or damaging any of your personal belongings.

Internal flooding

Under statutory compensation schemes, if there's been a flood inside your home (internal flooding) that was caused by the public sewerage network you're entitled to a full refund of the sewerage charge you've paid for the year (we will pay £150 as a minimum and a maximum of £1000). We will be working hard to try and prevent any future floodings. In the highly unlikely event that there is another sewer flood that affects the inside of your home, you'll receive another refund.

External flooding

Under statutory compensation schemes, if you've suffered flooding in your garden or driveway (external flooding) that was caused by the public sewerage network, you might be entitled to a payment of 50% of your sewerage charge, as a minimum we will pay you £75 and a maximum of £500. You won't receive this if the flood is classed as an escape of sewerage and not a flood. An escape of sewerage is a small amount of flooding in an isolated area. More details can be found in our Guaranteed Standards Scheme Code of Practice on our website.

Pollutions

Pollutions from wrong connections

It is important that connections are made to the correct type of sewer. For example, pollution can arise if foul flows are connected into surface water drains or sewers which then run into local watercourses.

Most problems are associated with the installation of washing machines or dishwashers, where outlet pipes are accidentally connected to a surface water drain instead of the foul drain. Chemicals and food waste can then contaminate the watercourse and affect water quality. Wrong connections can also occur from extensions when new toilets and sinks are incorrectly connected to the surface water drain.

If you are making any new connection to the foul or waste drains, please ensure that the connection is to a foul or combined drain/sewer. Information on how to correctly install a washing machine or dishwasher will be included in the device's instruction leaflets, and your local council will be able to advise you about any building regulation requirements concerning building drainage.

Sewer connections

New sewer connections

You are entitled to have your drain or sewer connected to our public sewer network to drain domestic foul sewage and storm water away, as long as it meets certain practical requirements. There will be a charge for this service which is explained below. It's your responsibility to undertake the design of the new drainage, locate a suitable sewer to connect to, confirm the location and depth of the sewer and to employ a suitable contractor to undertake the work on your behalf. Please note, although you can view our sewer records at our head office (or through our website as mentioned previously) they can contain some discrepancies.

Connection to an existing public sewer

Before connecting, you will need to give us details of the drain or sewer to be connected, where you intend to connect to our network, how the connection will be made and who will be completing the connection works. We will let you know within 21 days whether your proposals are acceptable. We can refuse the connection if the connection does not meet the required standards or is not suitable for our sewer. We would explain the reason for any refusal. For example, we won't agree to a foul drain to be connected to a surface water sewer and we won't allow a surface water pipe to be connected to a foul/combined sewer if there's a suitable surface water sewer available. If you disagree with our decision, you can appeal to our regulator Ofwat.

For each new sewer connection, you'll have to pay:

- An Application Fee: This covers our cost to assess your connection proposals, inspection of the work and, where relevant, transferring responsibility for the lateral drain or sewer to us.
- A S104 Agreement fee: This covers our costs to issue & complete the sewer adoption agreement
- A cash bond: The bond will be held during construction of your connection and utilised if the work does not meet the require standards. We will return the bond to you after signing the construction work off.
- An Infrastructure Charge: This is a fixed contribution to the cost of developing the local sewer network to account for growth. It's normally collected when you apply for the new water supply. More details on this are below in *Infrastructure Charges* subsection.

Once you've received approval you should give us a minimum of five days' notice of the day when your contractor intends on completing the connection works.

Sewer connections requiring a new public sewer

We may not have a suitable existing sewer for you to connect your property to, or it may require access across private land. In these circumstances, you and your neighbours, or the district council, can ask us to provide a suitable sewer for you to connect to and, where practicable, we will do so. If a new sewer is needed, we aim to install it within six months (or a longer period may be agreed) after an agreement is reached and design work is concluded. You will be required to pay the full cost of delivering the works, some of which will be required before we begin design work and the rest prior to construction. We will complete a final account with you after construction is finished to ensure we don't over recover.

If we fail to meet this deadline and you sustain loss or damage as a result, you may have a legal claim against us. Any dispute may be referred to Ofwat. Further information on this can be obtained from our Developer Services Team at developer@st-connect.co.uk

Provision of a public sewer where there are environmental or amenity problems

Since 1 April 1996, sewerage authorities have had a duty to provide a suitable public sewer for domestic purposes to properties, which are not currently connected directly or indirectly to public sewers. This duty applies where:

- The existing private drainage is causing or is likely to cause environmental or amenity problems; and
- Provision of a public sewer is a more appropriate cost beneficial solution compared to provision of a private option

Such applications will be assessed using the criteria set out in the guidance notes issued by Defra. Where our investigations show that the qualifying criteria are not met, we will explain the reasons why we've been unable to approve your application. Where the criteria are met, the cost of providing a suitable public sewerage system connected to your property will be funded by us as part of our investment programme.

Infrastructure charges

When a new property is connected to our water mains or sewerage system for the first time, we must make sure that we can deliver the same high standard of service because of the extra demand. For all new connections you must pay an infrastructure charge, which is a fixed contribution towards additional investment in our local drainage system. The charge is in addition to the actual cost of making a connection. Infrastructure charges are intended to make sure that the costs of the investment are met from a one-off charge to new properties as and when they are connected rather than from higher charges to existing properties. If your development site/address includes properties where there has previously been a billable account within 5 years of your new connection a credit may be applicable towards this cost.

If the infrastructure charges, or part of them, are not paid within 14 days of connection, or if an agreement to pay the charges is terminated incorrectly, then we have the right to recover the charges. If part of the infrastructure charges has already been paid, then this amount will be treated as a credit and subtracted from the total charge. The infrastructure charge for a domestic supply is agreed annually and agreed with Ofwat. Details on our charges can be found at [Developer Charges | Severn Trent Connect \(st-connect.co.uk\)](https://st-connect.co.uk).

Wastewater treatment and the Environment

Agency

Wastewater treatment

The sewers bring domestic and industrial effluents to WwTWs for treatment and safe disposal to rivers. The treated sewage effluent discharged from our treatment works must comply with statutory conditions set by the Environment Agency (EA). We take samples of our discharges, analyse them in a laboratory and then submit the results to the EA to show we are complying with our statutory conditions. The EA keeps a public register of these sample results and you can find out more about the EA below.

All sewage sludge, the by-product of sewage treatment, must be disposed of in accordance with statutory requirements and Government licences. We operate our works in accordance with good practice, but sewage can smell. We try to limit the smell as much as possible but cannot guarantee to eliminate it altogether.

If we're causing you a nuisance please contact us, our contact details can be found on the last page.

The Environment Agency

The EA is responsible for controlling the pollution of rivers, draining land, controlling floods, and issuing fishing licences. The EA regulates how much water we may take from the rivers and other inland and underground sources for water supply and our return of the water to rivers after it has been used and treated. Contact the EA at:

The Environment Agency
Sapphire House East
550 Streetsbrook Road
Solihull
B91 1QT
Tel: 0370 850 6506

Complaints

What if I have a dispute?

We are here to help you. We will investigate any issue, complaint or dispute you have, and we will follow the process detailed within our Complaints Procedure in our Guaranteed Standards Scheme guide on our website. Whilst we're investigating your dispute, we won't take any further action. For further information, please visit [Wastewater services to household customers | Severn Trent Connect \(st-connect.co.uk\)](#).

Contact us

The quickest and easiest way to get in touch with our teams is by email at customer@st-connect.co.uk

Questions about your bill

If you have a question about your bill please contact our billing partner, South East Water on: 0333 000 0001, lines are open Monday to Friday between 8am and 7pm, and Saturdays between 8am and 1pm.

Questions about your sewerage services or emergencies

If you have an operational issue please report this via our website at [Contact Us | Severn Trent Connect](#).

In an emergency please call 0845 555 5557, this number is manned 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.