

# **The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999, The Scottish Water Byelaws 2004 and the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009**

## **What are they and how do they affect you?**

**WRAS**  
Water Regulations Advisory Scheme

**This leaflet provides information about the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations in England and Wales, the Scottish Water Byelaws 2004 and Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 and how they affect you.**

### **What are the Water Fittings Regulations?**

The Water Fittings Regulations and Scottish Byelaws 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.

They replace the former Water Supply Byelaws and water regulations which each water supplier administered for similar purposes for a number of years.

### **Where do they apply?**

Since 1 July 1999 in England & Wales, 30 August 2004 in Scotland and 3 August 2009 in Northern Ireland 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.

### **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 Codes of Practice on Enforcement. As with the previous Supply Byelaws, 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?**

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

#### **1. Plumbing systems to comply**

Plumbing systems must be designed, installed and maintained to meet the regulations' requirements. Plumbing materials and fittings must be of a suitable standard. It is not illegal to sell unsuitable fittings and appliances but to install one would be illegal, so check suitability before purchase. The regulations list the standards which fittings must meet and the Water Fittings and Materials Directory, published by the Water Regulations Advisory Scheme (WRAS) on the WRAS website, gives up-to-date details of a wide range of items which have been tested and proved to comply.

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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 Plumber** who will guarantee compliance of the new installation.

The Regulations cannot be applied retrospectively if a water fitting was installed in compliance with the 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 the Water Industry Acts.

## 2. Prevention of backflow

Backflow occurs when contaminated 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:

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

In Northern Ireland, in addition to the previous, notification is 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<sup>†</sup>
- 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<sup>†</sup>

For notification, the following information must be sent to the local water supplier (see the phone book for the address):

- 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 Plumbers

An Approved Plumber will provide a certificate to state that their installation or maintenance work satisfies the regulations. If breaches of regulations are found in the certified work, the legal responsibility falls upon the Approved Plumber and not on the owner or occupier. Installation by an Approved Plumber 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 are available from the local water supplier of Approved Plumbers who have demonstrated their experience of plumbing work and knowledge of the regulations and have liability insurance cover.

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

For England and Wales, the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations and their Schedules, Statutory Instruments 1999 No.1148 and No.1506, are available from HMSO and via the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) at <http://archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/water/industry/wsregs99/> Copies of the Scottish Water Byelaws 2004 are available from Scottish Water. For the Northern Ireland regulations refer to [www.niwater.com](http://www.niwater.com) or <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2009/255/contents/made>

The Government has also published on the DEFRA website Guidance Document relating to the Schedules to the regulations.

The text of all these documents is included with detailed Water Industry guidance and interpretation in the 'Water Regulations Guide', available from the Water Regulations Advisory Scheme.

Water Suppliers cannot provide a design service for installations, but WRAS 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:

See the local telephone book, under 'Water'. The WRAS website lists contact details for Water Fittings Regulations departments in all water suppliers.

### The Water Regulations Advisory Scheme (WRAS):

The Scheme is funded by all the UK Water Suppliers to provide an advisory service for Water Regulations.

Advisory leaflets are available free of charge on the WRAS website, where the Water Fittings and Materials Directory is also available. Further useful information is given on the website [www.wras.co.uk](http://www.wras.co.uk).

WRAS offers a free technical enquiry service for those with questions of interpretation of the Regulations.



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