

The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999

What are they?

How do they affect you?

What are the Regulations?

The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 are national requirements for the design, materials, installation and maintenance of plumbing systems, water fittings and appliances. Their purpose is to prevent waste, misuse, undue consumption and above all the contamination of water supplies. They replace the Water Byelaws in England and Wales which each of the water suppliers have issued for similar purposes for many years.

The water supply companies are responsible to the Government for the enforcement of the Regulations

Where do they apply?

They came into effect on July 1st 1999 and apply to all plumbing systems, fittings and equipment in all types of premises supplied with water by the statutory water suppliers in England and Wales. The Regulations apply from the point where the underground service pipe enters the property, usually at the boundary of the premises with the street in which the water main serving the premises is laid.

Who has to comply?

Owners and occupiers of premises and anyone who installs plumbing systems have a legal duty to ensure that the systems they use or install satisfy the requirements of the Regulations. In many situations advanced notice of proposed installations must be given to the relevant water supplier by the installer. Architects, designers, installers etc. have to follow the requirements of the Regulations on behalf of future owners/users.

Enforcement

The water supply companies are responsible to the Government for the enforcement of the Regulations. In line with nationally accepted guidelines they will undertake inspections of new and existing premises to ensure the requirements of the Regulations are met. Where contraventions of the Regulations are found Yorkshire Water will respond in a manner appropriate to the risk posed to water supplies. This response may consist of issuing the appropriate advice to the installer, owner etc. In situations where the risk of contamination is imminent the response may result in disconnection of the water supply. It is a criminal offence to breach the 'Water Regulations' and offenders reluctant to co-operate with the requirements may face prosecution.

How do the Regulations affect you?

- Your plumbing system, and alterations to it, must be installed and maintained to comply with the requirements of the Regulations.
- You must prevent waste, misuse, undue consumption and contamination of the water supply within your premises.
- You must give advance notification of many types of installation work.
- Plumbing fittings and appliances used must meet Regulatory requirements.

Plumbing systems to comply

Plumbing systems must be designed, installed and maintained to meet the Regulatory requirements. Plumbing materials, fittings and appliances must be of a suitable standard. The Regulations list the standards for suitability and the Water Fittings and Materials Directory, published by WRAS (The Water Regulations Advisory Scheme) , gives up to date details of a wide range of water fittings, appliances and materials that have been tested and found to comply.

Plumbing must be properly installed and maintained to protect water quality, to ensure safety, ease of access for maintenance, detection of leakage and protection against damage from freezing and other causes. If you are doing your own installation, ensure you are aware of the requirements you must meet. If you are employing a contractor consider using one who can guarantee compliance with the Regulatory requirements.

The Regulations are not retrospective. Any plumbing system or water fitting lawfully installed before the Regulations came into force under Water Byelaw requirements may still be used, even if its installation would now be unlawful.

Prevention of contamination

Where water or water using equipment is used with fluids, substances or materials which could contaminate it, there must be adequate protection in place to prevent the backflow or backsiphonage of contaminants into the water supply. The Regulations define fluid risk categories according to the type and concentration of contaminant likely to be present and specify the type of backflow prevention device required in each situation.

Notification

For the majority of installations, before work starts, the installer must give notice to the water supplier and obtain consent to begin work. This requirement applies to the following:

- The erection of a building or other structure, not being a pond or swimming pool¹.
- The extension or alteration of a water system on any premises other than a house.
- A material change of use of any premises.
- The installation of-
 - a bath having a capacity of more than 230 litres*²;
 - a bidet with an ascending spray or flexible hose;
 - a single shower unit with multiple outlets*³
 - a pump or booster drawing more than 12 litres per minute
 - a unit which incorporates reverse osmosis;
 - a water treatment unit which produces a waste water discharge or uses water for regeneration or cleaning;
 - a reduced pressure zone valve assembly or other mechanical device for protection against a fluid in category 4 or 5; (see Section 6 in Schedule 2 of the Regulations)
 - a garden watering system unless designed to be operated by hand*; or
 - any water system laid outside a building less than 750mm or more than 1350mm below ground level.
- The construction of a pond or swimming pool with a capacity greater than 10,000 litres which is designed to be replenished by automatic means and is to be filled with water supplied by a water undertaker*.

¹ See last item in the list of notifiable installations

² As measured to the centerline

³ capacity yet to be specified

Notices required under this Regulation in the Yorkshire area of supply should be sent to the address shown on this leaflet.

Notices must include:

- the name and address of the person giving the notice or, if different, the name and address of the person to whom consent should be given.;
- a description of the proposed work or material change of use;
- the location of the premises to which the proposal relates, and the use or intended use of those premises;
- except for items marked* above, a plan of those parts of the premises to which the proposal relates;
- a diagram showing the pipe-work and fitting to be installed; and
- where the work is to be carried out by an approved contractor, the name of the contractor.

Consent will not be unreasonably withheld but it may be granted subject to conditions. Consent, if not given within 10 working days will be deemed to have been granted. This does not alter the obligation of the installer to comply with the Regulatory requirements.

Approved contractors

A contractor approved by the water supplier must upon completion of the work furnish a signed certificate stating whether the water fitting complies with the requirements of these Regulations to the person who commissioned the work.

In the case of a fitting for which notice is required under the notification Regulation, the contractor must send a copy of the certificate to the water undertaker.

Where can I obtain a copy of the Regulations?

The Regulations are Statutory Instruments 1999 No.s 1148 and 1506 and are available from HMSO. The Regulations, Government Guidance and relevant information on the Regulations are available on the WRAS (Water Regulations Advisory Scheme) web site at www.wras.co.uk

Where can I obtain advice?

The Yorkshire Water address for advice and information on the Water Regulations is: P.O. Box 500, Western House, Halifax Road, Bradford. BD6 2LZ. Tel. 0845 1242424

The address of 'Water Regulations Advisory Scheme' is: Fern Close, Pen-Y-Fan Industrial Estate. Oakdale, Gwent. NP11 3EH. Tel 01495 248454