

Communications Code of Practice



Contact details

If you have any questions or need more information please contact us.

Web: **www.water.ie**
Twitter: **@IWCare**
Email: **customerservice@water.ie**
Address: **Irish Water, PO Box 448**
South City Delivery Office
Cork City

Account information or account enquiries

9am-5.30pm, Mon-Fri

Telephone: **0818 778 778** or **+353 1 707 2827**

ITRS: **1800 378 378** (for hard of hearing customers)

Water supply queries and emergencies

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Telephone: **1800 278 278** or **+353 1 707 2828**

ITRS: **1800 378 378** (for hard of hearing customers)

This publication is available in Braille, in audio on CD and in large text format on request by calling 1800 278 278.

Safeguarding our water for our future

December 2021

Introduction

Irish Water provides and manages public water and wastewater services on a national basis. This Code of Practice explains how we will communicate with our customers in an efficient and effective way.

If you would like to see our guidelines on our customer service and customer protection measures, you can read them in our Customer Handbook. You can find this at <https://www.cru.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CRU20116a-Irish-Water-Domestic-Customer-Handbook-October-2020-.pdf>.

We promise to have regular contact with our customers and other stakeholders. We will always treat you with courtesy, dignity and respect. We hope to work with you as we aim to provide cost effective, efficient, economically viable and environmentally sustainable water services for the people of Ireland.

For our Domestic customers, we also have a Code of Practice for each of the following:

- vulnerable customers;
- complaint handling;
- metering; and
- network operations.

You can ask for a copy of any of these documents by calling us on **1800 278 278** or **+353 1 707 2828** or by visiting <https://www.water.ie/about/our-customer-commitment/>.

We use 'water services' in this Code of Practice to include the public water and wastewater services that we provide.

Our communication principles

The following seven communication principles are central to the quality of communication we provide to our customers:

1. Plain English and Universal Design

We promise to use plain English in our communications. This includes using easy-to-understand language, to the greatest extent possible, and clear and user-friendly design. The water services industry often uses technical language, which we will explain using more everyday language.

We also promise to use Universal Design (UD) when we communicate with you. Universal design in this context means that information can be accessed, easily understood and used by everyone – certainly our intended readers (regardless of their age, ability or disability).

2. Our information is available in different formats

Where it is possible, we will make sure that any information we make available to the public is also available in formats that will suit the needs of all our customers. You will be able to download any of our publicly available information from our website, **www.water.ie**.

3. Timeliness

We will provide timely information about our planned operations in the most appropriate way for the customers living in areas likely affected. To lessen disruption for customers, we will let them know about any planned operations as soon as possible.

4. Accurate information

We will give you accurate information that will be as detailed as possible. This will make sure our customers know about any water-related matters affecting them.

5. Openness, transparency and fairness

We will always provide information in the spirit of openness, transparency, integrity and fairness.

6. Responsiveness

Our customer service team is trained to respond to your needs in a sensitive and kind manner. The team will listen to any concerns that you may have about our services.

7. Respect and courtesy

We are committed to communicating with all our customers in a friendly, respectful and courteous way.

Information for customers

We will use different means of communications (such as phone, email, letter, text) to give you information about:

Connection matters

- how to ask for a new connection to the water and/or wastewater network and where to get the right application forms;
- where to find information on how often you will be charged, the method we use to calculate charges and an idea of how much this will cost you;
- where to find the right contact details for new connections and connection queries at Irish Water;

Water and wastewater networks

- how to ask for information on existing water and/or wastewater networks, including information on any charges to use or connect to such networks;
- how to get rid of substances such as fats, oils and greases that are not allowed through wastewater systems;
- who owns and looks after pipework (available as a diagram);

Contact information if there is an emergency or a problem

- who to contact in an emergency or to report a pipe fault;
- what to do if you notice a leak or an issue with pipework on your premises or outside your premises;

Group water schemes

- where to find information on group water schemes and the difference between Irish Water-supplied services and group water scheme services;

How to make a complaint

- how to make a complaint (more details below and in our Complaints Code of Practice, www.water.ie/about/our-customer-commitment/)

Opening and managing your account

Joint account

If you want to open a joint account, we will confirm this with you and check with any other named person that they wish to be added to the account.

Adding a named contact

We will provide a simple way for you to add a nominated contact to your account. If you are on either the Special or Priority Customer Register and wish to name an alternative person to deal with your bills and correspondence, you should register their contact details with us on the Vulnerable Customer Registration Form at <https://www.water.ie/help/domestic-account/vulnerable-customers/register/>.

Terms and conditions

When you sign up with Irish Water, we will tell you where to find a copy of the terms and conditions of supply for water services. If you request a copy, we will send it to you in the post or in an email.

We will highlight and explain key terms and conditions, including any penalty that may apply if you do not follow our terms and conditions.

We will also tell you to where you will find information on water conservation.

Vulnerable customers

We will tell you about our Special Services Register and our Priority Services Register. These are registers (lists) for our vulnerable customers. We will explain these registers to you and why a customer might be considered a vulnerable customer. If you believe you meet the conditions we will tell you how you can apply to be entered on one or other of these registers.

For a copy of our 'Code of Practice on Vulnerable Customers' please go to www.water.ie/about/our-customer-commitment/.

Communicating with you during interruptions to supply

In this code, a 'supply interruption' is any incident related to Irish Water activities or assets (such as a burst in the pipework) that causes a disturbance in your water supply.

This may include:

- a complete interruption of supply; or
- a significant drop in water pressure at your property.

Planned interruptions

We will provide regular up-to-date information before, and during, planned interruptions to normal supply. For example, we will publish supply interruption details on www.water.ie and publish details on our Twitter feed [@IWCare](https://twitter.com/IWCare). You can also ring our phone helplines for further information.

If you are going to be affected by interruptions, we will tell you (through the communication channels above):

- the planned timing of the interruption at least two working days beforehand; and
- how soon we believe normal supply will resume.

We also have specific notification requirements for customers registered on the Special and Priority Services Registers in accordance with the 'Code of Practice on Vulnerable Customers'.

We will use a range of communication channels set out above to share information about planned interruptions.

Unplanned interruptions

If there is an unplanned interruption to your water supply, we (and/or our service providers, which includes local authorities) will make sure you receive regular updates.

Again, we will tell you:

- how long we think the interruption will last; and
- when normal supply is likely to resume.

We will publish this information no later than two hours after we become aware of the interruption (or five hours after, in the case of an extreme weather event). We will also provide these updates through a range of communication channels set out above.

Communications when water is unfit for human consumption

Our aim is to provide water that is fit for human consumption and to provide this service everywhere in the country. Where we do not reach this level of service, for whatever reason, and water is deemed unfit for human consumption, we will issue a:

Boil Water Notice: We issue a **Boil Water Notice** (BWN) to tell people that water from the water mains in their area is not safe to drink unless it is boiled and cooled beforehand.

We usually issue Boil Water Notices because of the risk of or confirmed contamination by harmful organisms (pathogens) such as E. coli or cryptosporidium.

Drinking Water Restriction Notice: We issue a **Drinking Water Restriction Notice** when there is contamination of the water supply, and boiling the water is not sufficient to make the water drinkable.

We usually issue a Drinking Water Restriction because there is an immediate risk of or confirmed contamination from a chemical contaminant (for example, hydrocarbons) which poses an immediate risk to public health.

For both Boil Water Notices and Drinking Water Restrictions Notices

We will only issue Boil Water Notices and Drinking Water Restriction Notices following consultation and agreement with the Health Service Executive (HSE). If the risk to public health is very high we may unilaterally put a notice in place, but only if we believe consultation with the HSE might cause a delay in informing the public. The HSE is the statutory consultee on public health matters.

We issue notices to inform you about what is happening and explain why. We also keep you up-to-date on our progress tackling the issue behind them.

We will use the appropriate channels to communicate with all affected customers in order to:

Inform: customers it is not safe to drink the water, or of the need to boil the water. We will also tell them about any other precautionary measures, as advised by the Health Service Executive.

Explain: to our customers why the need for the notice has arisen.

Provide updates: if the issue is with the public water supply, we will provide regular updates on our progress to rectify the issue.

We contact customers on our Priority Services Register directly

If you are a customer on our Priority or Special Services Register, we will contact you **directly** because we know you are critically dependent on the water supply. We will keep you informed about any notices that declare water unfit for human consumption in your area.

Regular updates about water notices

We will regularly publicise updated information regarding the 'Boil Water Notice' or 'Drinking Water Restriction Notice'. When Irish Water becomes aware of when the water supply has been deemed to be safe for consumption, we will communicate this information accordingly. We will do this through a range of communication channels.

Alternative water supply arrangements

For public health and safety reasons, or other emergency reasons, we may provide you with alternative water supply arrangements. For example, an alternative water supply could be tankered water (tanks of drinkable water). If we do this, we will contact you and all affected customers through a range of communication channels such as phone, text, email, website or social media. We will contact you so that you know:

- why you have been provided with an alternative water supply and where it is located;
- the safety measures you need to take when using this water to ensure you remain healthy, particularly the requirement to **boil the water** from this supply **before** you drink it;
- how long the alternative supply will be available; and
- what we are doing to fix the public water supply issue (if this is the cause of the issue) using published and other communication methods.

We will contact all customers on our Priority Services and Special Services registers directly to tell them the above information. We will also offer these customers extra help that they may need.

Customer engagement

Contact details on Irish Water's website

A range of channels which you can use to contact us are available on our website, www.water.ie.

Communicating with you through printed material

We will make printed material available to all our customers/potential customers on request. If you would like a copy our:

- Terms and Conditions of Water Services;
- Codes of Practice; and
- Customer Charter.

You can:

- visit our website (www.water.ie) to download a copy;
- phone us on **1800 278 278** or **+353 1 707 2828**;
- email us at customerservice@water.ie; or
- write to us at the address on the first page of this Code of Practice.

Customer contact in person

Sometimes one of our representatives (or a service provider, working on our behalf) needs to visit you in person at your property. They may need to do this for account management, maintenance or operational reasons. They may visit either with or without arranging an appointment with you. Our representative or service providers will show you their identity card. This card shows:

- their full name;
- their photograph; and
- their name, business address and contact number of Irish Water.

If local authority staff are working on our behalf, they will show you their identity card which will show:

- their full name;
- their photograph; and
- the local authority's name, business address and contact number.

In both cases, the representative will tell you why they are calling to your home. You can contact us on **1800 278 278** to confirm the identity of our staff member or service provider. Please read the tips about people visiting your home below.

Unless a customer asks us to, and apart from maintenance and operational reasons, Irish Water will **not** contact you on:

- Christmas Eve;
- a public or bank holiday;
- Sundays; and
- times out **outside** the following hours:
 - 9am-9pm on weekdays; and
 - 11am-5pm on Saturdays.

Communicating with you by phone

All our customers (or potential customers) can phone us to find out more about:

- water or wastewater service supply;
- our connection policy;
- metering; and
- any other relevant area of our business.

You can find our contact details on the first page of this Code of Practice or you can find them online at **www.water.ie**.

Our friendly and helpful staff are trained to take your calls and help you as best they can. Please go to our website to find the telephone contact details you may need or on our printed documents.

Our contact centre opening hours are:

- for water supply queries and emergencies, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; and
- for general customer service queries, 9am–5.30pm, Monday-Friday.

Unless a customer asks us, and apart from during an emergency or interruption to service, Irish Water will not contact a domestic customer by phone on:

- Christmas Eve;
- a public or bank holiday;
- Sundays; and
- times out **outside** the following hours:
 - 9am-9pm on weekdays; and
 - 11am-5pm on Saturdays.

Communicating with you by email

We may from time to time contact our customers by email. In all email correspondence, we will provide the following:

- Irish Water's name and address; and
- Irish Water's email address or other means of electronic contact; or
- Irish Water's contact number.

Communicating with you by SMS (text message)

We may from time to time send you text messages. When we use text messages, we will identify ourselves as Irish Water.

We will not contact a customer by text messages (apart from messages during or regarding emergencies or interruptions to service) on:

- Christmas Eve;
- a public or bank holiday;
- Sundays; and
- times out **outside** the following hours:
 - 9am-9pm on weekdays; and
 - 11am-5pm on Saturdays.

Complaints

At Irish Water, we aim to deliver the best service possible. If you are unhappy with any part of our service, we encourage you to let us know and we will do everything we can to resolve the matter quickly and to your satisfaction.

When making a complaint to us, please give us:

- your name;
- your property address;
- your telephone number; and
- the details of the complaint, including:
 - dates (where appropriate);
 - reference or account numbers;
 - any information or documentation you think would help us to understand and investigate your complaint further; and
 - what you would like Irish Water to do to make things right.

You can call us on **1800 278 278** or **+353 1 707 2828** (9am–5.30pm, Monday–Friday) and we will try and resolve any problems over the phone.

Or write to us at:

Irish Water
PO Box 860
South City Delivery Office
Cork City

Or you can send an email to: **customerservice@water.ie**

We aim to settle any complaint as quickly and as fairly as possible. We will contact you within five working days of receiving your complaint. At this time, we will either offer you a solution or explain the steps we need to take to resolve your complaint (under normal conditions).

We will stay in touch

If your complaint is still open after five days, we will contact you with an update on or before the tenth working day from when you sent your complaint to us.

So we can resolve your complaint within two months, you may need to work with us. For instance, we may need to visit your property to investigate the problem. We will keep you informed on progress we are making in resolving your complaint. We have a separate 'Code of Practice on Complaint Handling'. To receive a copy of this, you can:

- call us on **1800 278 278** or **+353 1 707 2828**;
- email us at **customerservice@water.ie**;
- write to us at the address on the first page of this Code of Practice; or
- view it online at **<https://www.water.ie/about/our-customer-commitment/>**

Data protection

As part of a customer's interaction with Irish Water, a customer may provide personal data to Irish Water. All personal data will be treated in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679) and the Data Protection Act 2018. In order to provide services to our customers, Irish Water engages service providers to help us deliver our services. Accordingly, personal data may be passed to our service providers or collected by service providers on Irish Water's behalf but only insofar as is necessary to provide water services to the customer.

For further information about how Irish Water processes personal data, data protection rights or to raise a query, please see our Privacy Notice at www.water.ie/privacy-notice/

Marketing and privacy

Irish Water respects the privacy of our customers. You can let us know either by phone, in writing, by email or by text if you do not wish us to contact you for marketing purposes. We will record your request and make sure your details are removed from our marketing database. You can ask us to confirm in writing that we have done this.

Irish Text Relay Service (ITRS)

1800 378 378

What is ITRS?

ITRS translates text into voice and voice into text to make it easier for deaf and hard of hearing people to make and receive calls. ITRS agents receive your calls and texts and translate them.

Do I need to register for the ITRS App?

Only a phone number is required to register. No further information is required. You can download the app or go to www.itrs.ie for further information. The app will ask you to register the phone number you will be using to make or receive calls. Follow the instructions in the app or click on the 'Getting Started' tab on the ITRS home page.

How do I register my number?

To use the ITRS app, you must first register the phone number you will be using to make and receive calls on the app.

- **Step 1:** In the ITRS app, go to 'Menu' then 'Registration'. Enter your phone number and then press 'Register'. You will be asked to phone the ITRS number to confirm your chosen phone number.
- **Step 2:** Leave the app and make the call from the phone number you are registering. You will only have 60 seconds to make this call.
- **Step 3:** Open the ITRS app again to receive confirmation that your number has been registered successfully.
- **Step 4:** To end, hang up the registration call and close the ITRS app.

Your phone number will now be registered and you can use the ITRS app.

Visiting your home

Our staff and service providers are trained to always identify who they are and who they are representing. They will always show you their identity card. You can contact us on **1800 278 278** to confirm the identity of our staff members or service providers.

Below is a series of steps you should follow when dealing with people calling to your home:

- Look through a window or door viewer before opening the door.
- Open your door only after connecting a door chain lock or placing your foot behind the door.
- Switch on outside lights when it is dark.
- Request and examine identity cards.
- Think 'safety' – do not leave strangers alone on your doorstep while you go into another room. Always close the door if you need to do this. Do not leave strangers alone in your home.
- Take precautions – if you are unsure or suspicious, please refuse access and contact us on **1800 278 278** to confirm the identity of our staff member or service provider.