

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 is responsible for providing and managing public water and wastewater services on a national basis. This Code of Practice outlines how we will maintain efficient and effective communications between our customers and Irish Water. To view the other guidelines for Irish Water in terms of required levels of customer service and customer protection measures to be implemented, please see the Customer Handbook which is available at <https://www.cru.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CRU20116a-Irish-Water-Domestic-Customer-Handbook-October-2020-.pdf>. At the heart of this commitment is our promise to continuously engage with our customers and other stakeholders in a spirit of collaboration, mutual respect and courtesy, working towards the delivery of cost effective, efficient, economically viable and environmentally sustainable water services for the people of Ireland.

We also have a Code of Practice for vulnerable customers, complaint handling, metering and network operations. You can request a copy by calling us on: **1800 278 278** or **+353 1 707 2828** or you can visit **www.water.ie**

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

Communication principles

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

1. Plain English / Universal Design

The water services industry, by nature, uses technical language and terminology. We commit to using non-technical and easy-to-understand language, to the greatest extent possible when we communicate with our customers.

We commit, to the greatest extent possible, to using plain English and apply the principles of Universal Design (that is, to communicate so that information may be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability¹) in all communication with customers.

2. Access to information communicated

We will, to the greatest extent possible make sure that any information we make available to the public is also available in alternative formats to 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

Information relating to Irish Water's planned operations will be published in the most appropriate media for the customers living in an area impacted by the operations. The information will be provided in a timely manner to minimise inconvenience to our customers.

4. Adequacy

All information will be as detailed as possible, clear and accurate so that customers are informed of all water-related matters affecting them.

5. Openness, transparency and fairness

All information will be provided in the spirit of openness, transparency and fairness with a commitment to integrity at all times.

6. Responsiveness

Our customer service team is trained and prepared to respond to the needs of our customers in a sensitive and compassionate manner. The team is prepared to listen to any issues or concerns that customers may have regarding our services.

¹ Source: <http://www.universaldesign.ie/explore&pdiscovers>

7. Courtesy, dignity and respect

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

Provision of Information to Customers

We will provide through a range of communication channels detail of:

- The process a customer must follow to request a new connection to the water and/or wastewater network and relevant application forms;
- How to access information on a schedule of connection charges and a clear and transparent connection charging methodology, with worked examples of the typical Irish Water connection costs for domestic customers;
- How to access information on the process a customer must follow to request information on existing water and/or wastewater networks, including any associated charges for the use or connection to such networks;
- Contact details for new connections/connection queries at Irish Water;
- Guidance to Irish Water customers with regard to disposal of substances not permitted through wastewater systems;
- Contact details for emergencies or pipe faults;
- Pipework responsibility and ownership with diagrammatic representation;
- Details of the process a customer should follow if they notice a leak or an issue with pipework on their premises or outside their premises;
- Broad guidance on group water schemes and distinction between Irish Water supplied services and group water scheme services;
- How a customer can make a complaint.

Opening and managing your account

Joint account

If a customer is opening a joint account, we will confirm with them and any other named person on the account that they wish to be included on the account.

Adding a named contact

We will provide a simple way for account holders to add a nominated contact to their account.

Terms and Conditions

When you sign up with Irish Water, we will direct you to where you can 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.

Key terms will be highlighted and explained, and we will explain any penalty that may apply if you do not abide by the Terms and Conditions.

We will direct you to where you will find water conservation information.

Vulnerable customers

We will explain to customers that we have a Special Services and a Priority Services Register, what they are and the circumstances in which a customer will be considered a vulnerable customer. We will also make it clear that any customer can apply to be put on these registers, if they believe they meet the relevant criteria. 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 that causes your water supply to be significantly impacted. 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 in advance of, and during, planned interruptions to normal supply. We will indicate the scheduled timing of the interruption and the anticipated likely time of restoration of supply. We will notify customers who we consider will be affected during a planned interruption via a range of communication channels at least two working days in advance of the event. In addition, there are specific notification requirements for those customers registered on the Special and Priority Services Registers in accordance with the 'Code of Practice on Vulnerable Customers'.

Notification of a planned interruption will be via a range of communication channels. Information shall also be made available to customers through our phone helplines. Supply interruption details will also be published on **www.water.ie** and posted on our Twitter feed **@IWCare**.

Unplanned interruptions

For unplanned interruptions, we, and/or our service providers (including Local Authorities) will ensure regular information updates, including the likely duration and anticipated time of restoration, are provided. This information will be published by us no later than two hours after we become aware of the interruption (or five hours after, in the event of an extreme weather event) and publicised through a range of communication channels.

Communicating with you when water is declared to be unfit for human consumption

Our aim is to provide water that is fit for human consumption and to provide this service uniformly across the country. Where this level of service is compromised, for whatever reason, and water is deemed unfit for human consumption, the following will be issued:

Boil Water Notice: A **Boil Water Notice** (BWN) means a notice issued by Irish Water advising premises in an area that drinking water from the water mains is not safe to drink unless it is boiled and cooled beforehand. Except for exceptional circumstances where public health is considered to be at immediate risk, Irish Water will only issue a Boil Water Notice after consulting with the Health Service Executive (HSE), the statutory authority on public health matters. Boil Water Notices are typically imposed due to the risk of or confirmed contamination by harmful pathogens such as E. coli or cryptosporidium.

Drinking Water Restriction Notice: A **Drinking Water Restriction Notice** means a notice issued by Irish Water advising premises in an area where there is contamination of the water supply, and boiling the water is not sufficient to make the water potable. Except for exceptional circumstances where public health is considered to be at immediate risk, Irish Water will only issue a Drinking Water Restriction Notice after consulting with the Health Service Executive (HSE), the statutory authority on public health matters. Drinking Water Restriction Notices are typically imposed due to the imminent risk of or confirmed contamination from a chemical contaminant at levels which pose an immediate risk to public health; for example, Hydrocarbons.

When these notices are issued

In the event where notices that declare water unfit for human consumption are issued i.e. a 'Boil Water Notice' or a 'Drinking Water Restriction Notice', for a particular geographical area because of an issue with the public water supply, we, or our service providers, will communicate with all affected customers through appropriate communication channels 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.

Priority services customers

We will contact all registered priority services customers directly who have registered as being critically dependent on water supply. As outlined in the previous three points, we will keep them informed about notices that declare the water is unfit for human consumption.

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

In instances where (for public health and safety reasons, or other emergency reasons) customers are provided with alternative water supply arrangements, Irish Water or its service providers, shall communicate with all anticipated affected customers through a range of communication channels to:

- inform the customer of the reason why the alternative water supply has been put in place;
- inform the customer that the water from the alternative tankered water supply should be boiled before drinking and explain the reasons why;
- inform the customer of any other precautionary measures that should be taken;
- inform the customer where Irish Water or its service providers will locate and facilitate alternative water supplies;
- highlight the anticipated duration of the alternative supply; and
- provide regular updates on progress to rectify the issue with the public water supply if this is the cause of the issue.

Irish Water shall contact all registered priority services customers and relevant special services customers directly to inform them where alternative supply arrangements have been put in place (as outlined above) and offer assistance, where required.

Updated information on alternative water supply duration will be regularly publicised through a range of communications channels.

Customer Engagement

Contact details on Irish Water's website

We will make available on our website, a range of channels which you can use to contact us.

Communicating with you through printed material

Printed communications material will be made available to all our customers/potential customers on request. If you would like a copy of any of the following, please visit our website www.water.ie where you can download a copy or phone us on **1800 278 278** or **+353 1 707 2828**, email us at customerservice@water.ie or you can write to us at the address set out at the top of this Code of Practice and request a copy of our:

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

Customer contact in person

If an Irish Water representative or a service provider, working on our behalf, has a need to visit a customer in person for account management, maintenance or operational reasons at their property (with or without a pre-arranged appointment) or by personal contact, they shall:

Produce an identity card that 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 produce an identity card that shows:

- 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.

Unless requested by a customer, and apart from maintenance and operational reasons, Irish Water will not contact a domestic customer at their home for direct communication purposes:

- a) on Christmas Eve;
- b) on any Public or Bank Holiday;
- c) on Sundays; and
- d) outside the following times:
 - 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.

Our contact details are shown at the top of this Code of Practice or you can find them online at **www.water.ie**.

Our staff is sufficiently trained to deal with such contact from customers. Telephone contact details are made easily visible on Irish Water's website and in print media,

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

- a) on Christmas Eve;
- b) on any Public or Bank Holiday;
- c) on Sundays; and
- d) outside the following times:
 - 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

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

Irish Water will not contact a customer by SMS messages (apart from messages during or regarding emergencies or interruptions to service):

- a) on Christmas Eve;
- b) on any Public or Bank Holiday;

- c) on Sundays; and
- d) outside the following times:
 - 9am-9pm on weekdays; and
 - 11am-5pm on Saturdays.

Complaints

At Irish Water, we are committed to delivering 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 lodging a complaint with us, please provide the following information:

- Your name;
- Property address;
- Telephone number;
- Details of the incident or issue, including:
 - dates (where appropriate);
 - reference or account numbers;
 - any information or documentation you believe would assist us to understand and investigate your complaint further;
 - what you would like Irish Water to do to make things right.

Call us on **1800 278 278** or **+353 1 707 2828** (9am-5.30pm, Monday to 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

Email: **customerservice@water.ie**

We aim to settle any complaint as quickly and as fairly as possible. Within five working days of receiving your complaint, we will offer you a resolution or an outline plan of the steps we need to take to achieve a satisfactory resolution to your complaint (under normal conditions). If your complaint is still open, we will contact you with an update on or before the tenth working day from when you registered your complaint with us.

We are committed to resolving all complaints within two months (where the customer is engaging with Irish Water).

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, please call us on **1800 278 278** or **+353 1 707 2828**, email us at customerservice@water.ie, write to us at the address set out above, or view online at www.water.ie

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. Where a customer has indicated orally, in writing, by email or by SMS that they do not wish to be contacted by us for the purpose of marketing, we will record the request and remove the customer's details

from our marketing database. A customer may request written confirmation that they have been removed from our marketing database.

Irish Text Relay Service (ITRS):

1800 378 378

What is ITRS?

ITRS translates text into voice and voice into text to facilitate deaf and hard of hearing people in making and receiving calls in Ireland. Calls are relayed through ITRS agents who perform this translation.

How do I use ITRS?

Do I need to register for the ITRS App?

There is no registration required, just download the app or go to **www.itrs.ie** for further information. The app will require you to register the phone number you will be using to make or receive calls. Just follow the instructions in app or click on the “How Do I Use ITRS” tab on this site.

Register your 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 then be asked to make an activation call.
- Step 2: Leave the app and make the activation call from the mobile or landline number you are registering. You will only have 60 seconds to make this call.
- Step 3: Open the ITRS app again to receive confirmation your number has been registered successfully.
- Step 4: To end simply hang up the registration call and close the ITRS app.

Email: **customerservice@water.ie**

Twitter: **@IWCare**

Website: **www.water.ie**

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 member or service provider.

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

- Always look through a window or door viewer before opening the door;
- Only open your door 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;
- Always 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.