

# Communications Code of Practice



**If you have questions about your account or water services we are ready to help.** When you contact us it would help if you have your account number to hand. To protect your account, we can only discuss account information with the account holder or nominated person.

Web: [www.water.ie](http://www.water.ie)

Twitter: [@IWCare](https://twitter.com/IWCare)

**Irish Water**

**PO Box 860**

**South City Delivery Office**

**Cork City**

### **Billing and general queries**

9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri

Telephone: **Callsave 1850 448 448** or **+353 1 707 2824**

Minicom: **LoCall 1890 378 378**

(for hearing impaired customers with their own minicom equipment)

### **Water supply queries and emergencies**

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Telephone: **Callsave 1850 278 278** or **+353 1 707 2828**

Minicom: **LoCall 1890 378 378**

(for hearing impaired customers with their own minicom equipment)

Please note that the rates charged for 1850 (Callsave) and 1890 (LoCall) numbers may vary across different service providers. Calls made using mobiles may be more expensive.

This publication is available in Braille, on CD and in large text format on request by calling 1850 448 448.

**Safeguarding our water for our future**

**11<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

## **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 support the establishment of efficient and effective communications between our customers and Irish Water.

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, billing, complaint handling, metering and network operations. You can request a copy by calling us on:

**Callsave 1850 448 448** or **+353 1 707 2824** or you can visit **[www.water.ie](http://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 and engineering language and terminology. We commit to using non-technical and easy to understand language, whenever possible, when we communicate with our customers.

We commit, where 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 disability<sup>1</sup>) in all communication with customers.

## **2. Access to information communicated**

We will try to 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 publically 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 so as to minimise inconvenience to our customers.

## **4. Adequacy**

All information we provide will be detailed and clear so that customers will feel fully informed on all water related matters affecting them.

## **5. Openness and transparency**

All the information we provide will be done in the spirit of openness and transparency 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <http://www.universaldesign.ie/exploreampdiscover>

## **7. Courtesy, dignity and respect**

We are committed to engaging with all of the people we deal with in a friendly, courteous and respectful way.

## **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.

### **Billing**

We will clearly explain:

- in what way we will bill you;
- how often we will bill you;
- how you can make payments against your bill; and
- any budgeting options available.

### **Terms and Conditions**

When you sign up with Irish Water we will provide you with a copy of the Terms and Conditions of supply for Water Services.

We will explain that the duration of the Terms and Conditions is evergreen (this means the contract continues until you or Irish Water ends it).

We will also give you details of how much you will have to pay for the service(s) you are signing up for.

If you are not provided with a copy of these documents at the point of sign up, copies of these documents will be sent to you and key terms will be highlighted and explained; we will explain any penalty that may apply if you do not abide by the Terms and Conditions.

### **Vulnerable customers**

We will highlight that we have a special services and a priority services register, and what they are for. 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.

### **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;
- a blockage; 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 at least two 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 domestic vulnerable customer Code of Practice.

Notification of a planned interruption may be through direct communication with the customer or through a range of appropriate communication channels. Information shall 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 agents (including Local Authorities) will ensure regular information updates are provided, which will be communicated and publicised through a range of communication channels. Information in relation to such interruptions will be made available to customers through our phone helplines and posted on our Twitter feed **@IWCare**

## 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:** this is issued on the advice of the Health Service Executive and the Environmental Protection Agency in instances where it is essential for customers to boil all water used in the preparation of food and for direct consumption.
- **Drinking Water Restriction Notice:** this is issued on the advice of the Health Service Executive and the Environmental Protection Agency advising customers not to use water for drinking or food preparation.

## When these notices are issued

If there is a 'Boil Water Notice' or 'Drinking Water Restriction Notice' issued for a particular geographical area because of an issue with the public water supply, we or our agents, 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.

**Give a timeline:** We will tell our customers how long the notice is expected to last.

**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 four 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 about how long the 'Boil Water Notice' or 'Drinking Water Restriction Notice' will last. We will do this through a range of communication channels including:

- social media;
- customer emails;
- website information;
- local media; or
- phone helplines.

### 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 agents, shall communicate with all anticipated affected customers through a range of communication channels to:

- inform the customer it is not safe to drink the water and explain the reason why;
- inform the customer of any other precautionary measures that should be taken;

- inform the customer where Irish Water or its agents 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 social media, customer emails, regularly updated website information or local media, and will be made available to customers through phone helplines.

## Customer Engagement

### 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 phone us on **Callsave 1850 448 448** or **+353 1 707 2824** or visit our website **www.water.ie** where you can download a copy of our:

- Terms and Conditions of Water Services;
- Codes of Practice;
- Customer Charter; and
- Information on water charges.

### Customer contact in person

If an Irish Water representative or a contractor, working on our behalf, has a need to visit a customer in person for maintenance or operational reasons at their property (with or without a pre-arranged appointment) or by personal contact, the representative 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.

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) 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;
- billing; and
- any other relevant area of our business.

Our contact details are shown at the end of this Code of Practice or you can find them online at **[www.water.ie](http://www.water.ie)** or on your Irish Water bills.

Our contact centre opening hours are:

- for water supply queries and emergencies, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; and
- for billing and 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) 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:

- a) Irish Water's name and address; and
- b) Irish Water's email address or other means of electronic contact; or
- c) 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 in the text 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) any Public or Bank Holiday;
- c) on Sundays; and
- d) outside the following times:
  - 9am to 9pm on weekdays; and
  - 11am to 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.

Call us on **Callsave 1850 448 448** or **+353 1 707 2824** (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).

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 **Callsave 1850 448 448** or **+353 1 707 2824** or view online at **www.water.ie**

## Data protection

Irish Water and its agents recognise the rights of the customer under data protection legislation. Irish Water will only use personal information for the purposes for which it

was collected. Information may be passed to our agents in order to provide services for the customer but only insofar as is necessary to provide water services to the customer. All agents are fully trained on the relevant legislation and only act in accordance with our instructions. Further information on Data Protection can be accessed on Irish Water's Data Protection Notice at [www.water.ie](http://www.water.ie)

## 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.

## How to contact us

If you need help or assistance, please contact us at:

**Irish Water**  
**PO Box 860**  
**South Delivery Office**  
**Cork City**

Billing and general queries:

**Callsave 1850 448 448 or +353 1 707 2824**

9am-5.30pm Monday to Friday.

Water Supply queries and emergencies:

**Callsave 1850 278 278 or +353 707 2828**

24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Minicom: **LoCall 1890 378 378**

(for hearing impaired customers with their own Minicom equipment).

Please note that the rates charged for 1850 (Callsave) and 1890 (LoCall) numbers may vary across different service providers. Calls made from mobiles may be more expensive.

Email: **customerservice@water.ie**

Twitter: **@IWCare**

Website: **www.water.ie**

## Visiting your home

Our staff and agents are trained to always identify who they are and who they are representing. They will always show you their identity card.

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.