

# **UK WATER INDUSTRY 'DISTRACTION BURGLARY' PROTOCOL: VISITING CONSUMERS' HOMES**

**(For water undertakers, sewerage undertakers  
and their contractors)**

The purpose of this protocol is to help protect consumers from the risk of distraction burglaries.

Water and sewerage undertakers in the United Kingdom are committed to complying with this protocol and ensuring that any contractors working on their behalf also comply with the principles herein.

This protocol is based upon the Government's National Doorstep Cold Calling Protocol and is endorsed by the Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat), the Consumer Council for Water and Water UK.

## **Identification**

1. Each water or sewerage undertaker will provide and publicise a landline telephone number for consumers to check the identity of visiting representatives. This number will direct the caller to a person and not to an automated telephone service or answering machine. It will be publicised on the bills, principal consumer leaflets and website of the relevant water or sewerage undertaker. Where this is not a freephone number, calls should be charged at a local rate. (This applies to calls made from BT landlines; the cost of calls from other providers' landlines and mobile phones may differ).
2. Any visiting representative will always carry an identification card bearing his/her name, his/her photograph, and the name, address and contact landline telephone number of the relevant water or sewerage undertaker (or where appropriate its contractor).
3. When visiting the home of any consumer, the representative will state his/her name, the name of the relevant water or sewerage undertaker and the purpose of the visit. Where the representative works for a contractor, both the name of the contractor and the relevant water or sewerage undertaker will be given.
4. When visiting the home of any consumer that has chosen and registered a password with the water or sewerage undertaker, the representative will not expect access to the consumer's home, until and unless he/she has stated or given the required password to the consumer. Passwords are of particular value to consumers who are blind, or who have difficulty reading or seeing. Passwords will always be chosen by the consumer and not by the water or sewerage undertaker or its representatives.
5. When visiting the home of any consumer, the representative will give his/her identity card to the consumer and ask the consumer to check that he/she is satisfied that the card correctly identifies the representative.
  - If the consumer expresses any doubts, the representative will advise the consumer to ring the landline number shown on his/her ID card, the number provided on the consumer's water bill or leaflet, or the number listed for the relevant water or sewerage undertaker in the telephone directory.
  - When a consumer rings to verify the identity of the identity card holder and it is not possible for the water or sewerage undertaker (or where appropriate its

contractor) to verify the holder's identity immediately, the consumer will be advised not to permit entry and will be called back as quickly as possible with further information and advice.

- If the consumer has registered with the water or sewerage undertaker for large-print communications, or if the consumer asks the representative for a large-print version, the representative will give a large-print version (font size 14 or above) of his/her identity card to the consumer to check. This will also incorporate an enlarged photograph. Alternatively, the representative will provide a magnifying device to enable the consumer to see and check his/her normal-sized identity card.
- It is recommended that consumers who are blind or have difficulty seeing or reading choose and register a password, rather than trying to validate an identity card on the doorstep. Alternatively, the consumer may arrange for a neighbour to come and check the identity card for them.
- The representative will not enter the consumer's home, until the consumer is satisfied that his/her identity has been verified and until the representative is satisfied that the consumer has completed this check properly.

6. No representative will express dissatisfaction with any consumer that wishes to verify the representative's identity by calling the water or sewerage undertaker concerned.

#### **Visits agreed in advance**

1. Whenever a visit to a consumer's home has been agreed with the consumer in advance, an appointment will be offered; this will be for a specific date and within a specified timeband, for example a morning appointment, an afternoon appointment or a two-hour timeband such as between 9am and 11am.

2. The above clauses relating to identification cards and passwords apply for visits agreed in advance.

3. If the consumer requests that a third party, for example a neighbour, also attends, the representative will agree to this and not attempt to enter the consumer's home until the third party has arrived and is also satisfied that the representative's identity has been verified.

#### **Visits not agreed in advance**

(Please also refer to Emergencies)

1. Should it be necessary to visit a consumer's home without agreeing an appointment in advance, the above clauses relating to identification cards and passwords still apply.

2. If the consumer requests that a third party, for example a neighbour, also attends, the representative will agree to this and not attempt to enter the consumer's home until the third party has arrived and is also satisfied that the representative's identity has been verified.

3. If the consumer asks the representative to return at a later pre-arranged date and time, the representative will agree to this and advise the consumer how to make an appointment and how to arrange a password for added security. Where it is not practical or appropriate for the water or sewerage undertaker to make a return visit, the consumer will be informed at the time. The representative will explain the reasons why he/she cannot return and will withdraw.

4. No water undertaker, nor its contractor, will normally request access to an upper floor of any consumer's home to check the water supply.
5. No water or sewerage undertaker, nor its contractor, will make any such visits for the sole purpose of attempting to sell a service or a product.

#### **Declined access or entry**

1. No representative will express dissatisfaction with any consumer that declines to allow the representative into the consumer's home because the consumer is concerned about security, for example about the purpose of the visit or the representative's identity.
2. The representative will withdraw from the consumer's property immediately, if requested to leave because the consumer is concerned about security, for example about the purpose of the visit or the representative's identity.
3. Where a representative is refused access, he/she will notify the relevant water or sewerage undertaker, and where appropriate a record will be made of this.
4. The water or sewerage undertaker, or its contractor if appropriate, will contact the consumer concerned to provide reassurance that the visit and the representative were genuine. If appropriate, an appointment to visit the consumer at a later date and time will be arranged and the consumer given the option of choosing a password for added security. In these circumstances, if the consumer wishes, the password will then be confirmed in writing.

#### **Emergencies**

1. Though water and sewerage undertakers – or contractors working on their behalf – have the legal right to access any consumer's property in certain circumstances and, in the case of an emergency, do not need to give notice to the consumer affected, the above clauses relating to identification cards and passwords will still apply.
2. The representative will explain clearly what the emergency is and why access is needed.
3. The representative will not normally request access to an upper floor of any consumer's home to check the water supply.
4. The representative will act sensitively, if the consumer affected has a concern about security, for example the purpose of the visit or the representative's identity.

***This protocol does not affect the legal rights or obligations of householders, consumers or the water and sewerage undertakers of the United Kingdom, or their contractors.***

***The water and sewerage undertakers of the United Kingdom have agreed voluntarily to comply with this protocol and uphold the principles contained herein, until such time as this protocol is replaced or superseded.***