

Refill Stations

The Water Industry's approach to collaborative working with the National Refill Campaign

Introduction

This document places no legal obligations on Water Companies and was created by Water Industry Practitioners as guidance on the implementation of a new national Water Refill Initiative.

Refill is a partnership between Water UK, founding Community Interest Company City to Sea and the respective Refill Stations. It actively promotes free tap water. The campaign is designed to reduce plastic pollution, by encouraging the public to 'refill' rather than buy bottled water and encourages healthy hydration by making refilling a water bottle easy, social and rewarding. Through WaterUK the Water Industry is working in collaboration with Refill and Water Companies are taking their individual approaches to support the campaign.

This National initiative encourages non-household premises (including businesses, public sector organisations, charities and other bodies – any premises that isn't defined as a household) to sign-up and become a 'Refill Station' and commit to providing free water refills to the public. A Refill Station is a premise or location that has agreed to provide publicly accessible, clean and hygienic tap water free of charge. This may be from a source such as a water dispenser where the public can help themselves, or by a member of staff refilling the bottle from a tap. The aim of the partnership is to make refilling as accessible as possible, adding tens of thousands of Refill Stations across the country, whilst ensuring the water provided is wholesome and fit for human consumption.

The Regulations

The use of water in households and non-households supplied by Water Companies is regulated across England and Wales, in part, through the application of the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 - hereafter referred to as the Water Fittings Regulations.

The Water Fittings Regulations set out the design, maintenance and operating requirements required of plumbing systems, in all types of premises. They aim to protect public health and safeguard supplies by preventing the contamination, waste, misuse, undue consumption and the erroneous measurement of the water supplied.

Water Companies must also adhere to the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations as applicable in England and Wales.

The Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) exercises the powers and duties of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Welsh Government for monitoring Water Company performance to ensure rigorous Water Quality standards are maintained.

The role of water companies

Water Companies have a legal duty to enforce compliance with the Water Fittings Regulations within their appointed area of supply.

The introduction of retail competition for non-household water supplies in England does not

affect a Water Companies' duty to enforce the Water Fittings Regulations.

It is in everyone's interest for Water Companies to help all those involved in designing, installing, maintaining and operating plumbing systems to understand how to comply with the Water Fittings Regulations. The enforcement of the Water Fittings Regulations is an integral part of a Water Companies Drinking Water Safety Plans and is a key element in determining the strategy for managing their business risks.

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1.0 Purpose and scope

This document provides guidance for Water Companies on the appropriate standards which can be adopted to support the National Water Refill Initiative and to assist Water Companies in carrying out proportionate inspection activities at Refill premises.

2.0 Roles and responsibilities

Water UK: Water UK will maintain ownership and regular review of this guidance document and ensure it remains appropriate.

City to Sea: City to Sea are responsible for ensuring clear guidance is readily available to Refill Stations. City to Sea is committed to transparent and prompt communication with Water Quality contacts at each Water Company in the instance any concerns related to Water Quality are raised.

In response to a Water Quality failure and upon instruction from the Water Company, City to Sea will be responsible for removing the Refill Station from the Refill App and a local City to Sea community champion will be responsible for removing the Refill sticker from the Refill Station until such time the Water Company is satisfied there is no risk to public health.

City to Sea shall provide a monthly schedule to Water Companies of Refill stations signed up via the app.

Refill Station: The owner/occupier of the Refill Station is legally responsible for complying with the Water Fittings Regulations as well as any additional requirements set out and signed

up to as part of the Refill Terms and Conditions – <https://refill.org.uk/terms-and-conditions>.

Refill Station refers to the premises where free drinking water is provided to the public as part of the campaign organised by Refill. This document refers to Refill stations that are on the Refill app.

Refill Stations must provide the public with a wholesome drinking water source and be installed in such a manner that does not compromise Water Quality, for example the Refill tap must not be located near or directly over an open drain, or be located in a toilet environment. Under Regulation 5 of the Water Fittings Regulations, it is a legal requirement that any person who proposes to extend or alter a plumbing system as part of a new or existing Refill station shall give advance notice to their respective Water Company of the works to be undertaken unless the work is carried out by an approved WaterSafe plumber.

It is also a legal requirement under Regulation 4 of the Water Fittings Regulations that all fittings and materials that come into contact with the drinking water supply shall be of an appropriate quality and standard and be suitable for the circumstances in which it is used.

It shall be the responsibility of the owner/occupier of the Refill Station to contact their local Water Company to report any Water Quality concerns. Any Refill Station that fails Water Quality standards or contravenes the Water Fittings Regulations will be investigated by the respective Water Company and shall be removed from the Refill Scheme – including their app with immediate effect.

Refill Stations must also comply with any Water Quality notices and advice issued by the Water Company, such as 'Do Not Drink' and/or legal enforcement notices.

During a Water Quality investigation the owner/occupier of the Refill station shall rectify all contraventions identified in-line with

the rectification period required by the Water Company.

Water Companies:

A Water Quality complaint may be received directly from the Refill Station/retailer, a member of the public or City to Sea. Upon receiving a complaint the respective Water Company will investigate the matter in-line with their internal processes and enforcement policies. During an investigation, if contraventions of the Water Fittings Regulations are identified, appropriate enforcement action shall be undertaken to rectify the infringements with the owner/occupier of the Refill Station concerned. All associated costs for any necessary remedial works will fall under the responsibility of the owner/occupier of the Refill station.

Where an advice or enforcement notice is served by the Water Company on a Refill Station, or the Refill Station is associated with non-compliant Water Quality, the Water Company shall inform City to Sea, as this will result in the Refill Station being removed from the Refill scheme and app with immediate effect.

3.0 Water Fittings Regulations - Inspection process

This guidance document only applies to those premises connected directly or indirectly to the mains public drinking water network. Water Companies will carry out inspections in accordance with their respective enforcement policies.

4.0 Commitments

If a Water Quality complaint is reported, or where a Water Quality failure has been identified by a Water Company as part of their sampling programme, Water Companies shall carry out a reactive investigation in-line with their company policies and procedures.

In the event that an advice notice is issued by a Water Company on a Refill Station, i.e. Do Not Drink, Boil Water or Do Not Use - City to Sea shall be informed. In the first instance, whilst an investigation is being undertaken the Refill Station must immediately inform the public of any temporary unavailability of water for Refill. Depending on the findings of the Water Company investigation this may result in the immediate removal from the Refill scheme and app as per the Refill T&Cs.

Where additional plumbing works are to be undertaken in non-household premises to either provide or reposition a Refill point, any extensions or alterations to the plumbing system must be notified to the local Water Company. This is a legal requirement under Regulation 5 of the Water Fittings Regulations or unless the plumbing work is undertaken by an approved WaterSafe plumber.

Every Water Fitting installed or connected to the Refill Station must comply with Regulation 4 of the Water Fittings Regulations to demonstrate it is of an appropriate quality and standard and be suitable for the circumstances in which it is used.

Further advice on compliance with the Water Fittings Regulations can be obtained free through the local Water Company and can be found via the Water UK website:

www.water.org.uk/consumers/find-your-supplier

or WRAS (Water Regulations Advisory Scheme) www.wras.co.uk.

5.0 Actions

Water Companies will engage with premises offering a Refill Station, Local Authorities and City to Sea to implement the roles and responsibilities set-out in this guidance document.

6.0 Review period

The aim of WaterUK is to review this guidance document every 12 months.

7.0 References

The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999
The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2018
Water Regulations Advisory Scheme (WRAS)
Dwi.gov.uk/stakeholders/guidance-and-codes-of-practice

8.0 Participation

- Anglian Water
- Bristol Water
- City to Sea
- Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water
- Hafren Dyfrdwy
- Northumbrian Water
- Severn Trent
- Thames Water
- Water UK

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