

# Guidance Note

## Refill Stations - Water Fittings Regulations Identification and Inspection of Third-Party Refill Stations.

### Introduction

This document was created by Water Industry Practitioners as guidance for Water Companies 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 Station. It actively promotes free tap water. The campaign is designed to reduce plastic pollution, by encouraging customers to 'refill' rather than buy bottled water and encourages healthy hydration by making refilling a water bottle easy, social and rewarding. Each Water Company has committed to support Refill through Water UK in their area, and are all taking their individual approaches to supporting the rollout of Refill.

This national initiative encourages non-household (including businesses, public sector organisations, charities and other bodies – any premises that isn't defined as a household) premises to sign-up and become a 'Refill Station', and commit to providing free refills to customers. A Refill Station is a business 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 people 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 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 the UK, in part, through the application of the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations and the Scottish Water Byelaws, hereafter both 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 are also responsible for the implementation of The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations which apply to those Water companies whose areas of supply are wholly or mainly in England and The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2018 (SI 3991) which apply to Water companies whose areas of supply are wholly or mainly in Wales.

The Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) exercises the powers and duties of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the National Assembly for Wales, 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 and Scotland does not affect a Water companies' duty to enforce the Water Fittings Regulations. This change has introduced new terminology, Water wholesalers and Water Retailers. Water companies delivering water are referred to as wholesalers. Water Retailers play an important role in ensuring that communication with non-households about enforcement is not impacted.

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 company 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 are to be adopted to support the national Water Refill Initiative. The agreed industry guidance will assist Water companies in carrying out proportionate inspection activities on third party 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 and Refill customers regarding Water Quality and the Water Fittings Regulations, including through their app. City to Sea are also committed to transparent and prompt communication with Water Quality contacts in each Water company in the instance any concerns are raised.

City to Sea shall notify Water companies if they are made aware of a Water Quality complaint relating to a Refill Station. Any Refill Station that fails Water Quality standards or contravenes the Water Fittings Regulations will be automatically investigated by the respective Water Company and may be removed from Refill Scheme and app.

City to Sea to provide monthly schedule of Refill stations signed up via the app.

**Refill Station:** All participating Refill Stations must comply fully with those requirements set

out and signed up to in the Terms and Conditions – <https://refill.org.uk/terms-and-conditions/>

Refill Stations refers to the businesses who are providing free drinking water to the 'Customers' as part of the campaign organised by Refill. This document refers to Refill stations that are on the Refill app.

As is the case for any non-household premises, the owner/occupier of the Refill Station must ensure their plumbing system fully complies with the requirements of the Water Fittings Regulations. Refill Stations are not physically checked by City to Sea or Water companies before the location is signed-up onto the Refill app.

Refill Stations must provide customers 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 water fitting in connection with 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.

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.

As is the case for any non-household premises, in the event that a water company investigation identifies any infringements of the Water Fittings Regulations, Refill Stations must carry out any required remedial works with immediate effect to rectify **all** of the infringements identified on that plumbing system.

**Water companies:** When notified of a Water Quality complaint associated to any Refill

Station, the Water Company will investigate in-line with their internal processes. During an investigation, if contraventions of the Water Fittings Regulations are identified, appropriate enforcement action shall be undertaken to rectify any infringements with the owner/occupier concerned in-line with the companies' respective enforcement policy. As is the case for any non-household premises, all associated costs for any necessary remedial works will fall under the responsibility of the owner/occupier of the Refill station.

Whilst rectification works are being undertaken by a Refill Station, Water companies shall notify City to Sea on the seriousness of those infringements identified as per the Refill T&Cs. In the first instance, whilst works are being carried out by the owner/occupier the Refill Station must inform the customer of any temporary unavailability of water for Refill. Depending on seriousness of the contraventions identified this may also result in immediate removal from the Refill scheme and app.

In the event 'Do Not Drink' notices are issued by a Water company on a Refill Station, City to Sea shall be informed where applicable. In the most serious cases, this may result in removal from the Refill scheme.

### 3.0 Water Fittings Regulations - Inspection process

This guidance document only applies to those Refill Stations connected directly or indirectly to the mains public drinking water network. Water companies may carry out inspections in accordance with their respective Water company enforcement policies.

### 4.0 Commitments

If a Water Quality failure is reported, Water companies will carry out a reactive investigation and inform the Refill Station, City to Sea and the Water Retailer of their findings as per the Refill T&Cs.

In the event 'Do Not Drink' notices are issued by a Water company on a Refill Station, City to Sea shall be informed. In the first instance, whilst an investigation is being undertaken the Refill Station must inform the customer of any temporary unavailability of water for Refill. Depending on the findings of the investigation this may also result in immediate removal from the Refill scheme and app as per the Refill T&Cs.

Where additional plumbing works are to be undertaken in a 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 unless the 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](http://www.water.org.uk/consumers/find-your-supplier)

or WRAS (Water Regulations Advisory Scheme) [www.wras.co.uk](http://www.wras.co.uk).

### 5.0 Actions

Water companies will engage with third party premises, 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 the working group is to review this guidance document every 12 months.

## 7.0 References

The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999  
The Water Supply (Water Fittings) (Scotland) Byelaws 2014  
The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009  
The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2018  
Water Regulations Advisory Scheme (WRAS)  
[dwi.gov.uk/stakeholders/guidance-and-codes-of-practice](http://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
- Water UK

## Version control

Version:	FINAL1.0
<b>Status:</b>	<b>Final</b>
Date:	6 February 2019
Produced by:	Water UK
Consultation:	Water Industry Working Group
<b>Use:</b>	<b>Water Industry Guidance on Refill Stations</b>
Document Owner:	Jim Marshall
Review cycle:	Every 12 months