

Water and Wastewater Connections Policy

South Taranaki District Council



South Taranaki
Alive with opportunity

Executive Summary

To efficiently, effectively and safely run the Council's water supply and wastewater activities; and any issues with customers' connections to our mains are managed to:

- Ensure that levels of water leakage are acceptable;
- Regularise how cross boundary water connections will be addressed;
- Facilitate measurement of the amount of water supplied;
- Ensure that electrical safety is addressed when properties have been earthed to the water supply network; and
- Reduce the amount of rain water entering the sewerage system.

This Policy sets out a methodology to achieve this, together with incentives to encourage customers to comply with Council's requests.

Council's Role and Responsibility

The Council is responsible for compliance with the conditions of the Resource Consents it holds for its water supply and wastewater activities. To achieve the required level of performance, the condition of pipes on private property needs to be managed. There are also known issues with historic plumbing and electrical work undertaken on private property.

To effectively manage this requires a policy setting out how customers with "substandard" connections will be treated to ensure consistency of approach, fairness and ultimately that the Council meets its environmental obligations and performance objectives.

Purpose of the Policy

Managing pipework on private property, which is connected to the Council's water supply and wastewater infrastructure, is important as its poor performance can adversely affect the ability of the Council to deliver an efficient service and meet its environmental obligations. This Policy provides a framework to address issues that arise, and records the steps to be taken in the management of particular instances.

Objectives

1. Water Supply

The section of the water connection (service pipe) in the road reserve is generally owned by the Council and the Council carries out maintenance. The property owner is responsible for maintenance of the supply pipe on his/her property. The Council's Water Supply Bylaw defines the point of supply as the demarcation between public and private infrastructure.

If the customer's supply pipe is poorly maintained corrosion can result in leaks and unnecessary water demand. Where the demand from leakage is excessive, the Council runs the risk of not being able to renew its resource consents. Internal corrosion can also partially block the pipe, which reduces the pressure that will be experienced at the customer's property.

Legislation and bylaws define, in some instances, the customer's obligations for pipes on private property. In addition, not all properties have separate connections to the mains, and cross-boundary connections between properties hinder good management of the networks.



The objectives of the Policy relating to water supply connections are:

- To ensure that the water supply pipe from the water main is not leaking excessively or in a condition that limits the pressure available to the customer's premises.
- To allow metering of the water consumption of premises as a water demand management tool.
- To ensure that electrical safety is adequately managed where properties are earthed using their metallic water supply pipe.
- To ensure, where cross-boundary connection between properties exists, that where possible, they are eliminated (in time) or adequately managed (in the interim).

2. Wastewater

The sewer connection between a property and the sewer in the street, if not monitored and properly maintained by the property owner, can allow rain water to enter the sewer network, either by direct connection or the infiltration of ground water into the buried pipe. This can contribute to overflows from the reticulation network, increased pumping costs, and failure to comply with discharge resource consents.

The Council's Wastewater Bylaw provides definitions of public sewers versus private drains and the "point of discharge". Both legislation and the Bylaw define the customers' obligations for pipes on their properties.

The objectives of the Policy relating to wastewater connections are:

- To ensure that the sewer connection does not receive rainwater inflow from direct connection, such as roofs and paved surfaces.
- To ensure that the sewer connection does not receive an excessive amount of ground water infiltration.

Requirements of the Act, Bylaws and Resource Consents

Section 192 of the Act requires that persons supplied with water do not waste it or allow it to be wasted.

An offence is committed under Section 20.1 of the Council's Water Supply Bylaw if a customer allows water to run to waste from any pipe, tap, or other fitting, or allows the condition of the plumbing within the property to deteriorate to the point where leakage or wastage occurs.

Section 12 of the Council's Water Supply Bylaw defines the type of water supply, and whether it will be metered. Properties that consume more than a typical domestic property are (or will be) metered.

Resource consents, granted under the Resource Management Act 1991, for water abstractions within the District, generally require the Council to undertake leak detection and repair programmes and report on them annually to the Taranaki Regional Council. The renewal of Resource consents is becoming increasingly more onerous, and we are now being asked to fully justify our water consumption.

Section 11.1 of the Council's Water Supply Bylaw states that ownership and maintenance of pipes and fittings past the point of supply is the responsibility of the customer.

Section 459 of the Local Government Act 1974 allows Council to require a property owner to repair or relay an existing private drain.

Sections 9.9 and 9.10 of the Council's Wastewater Bylaw detail that the customer's obligations are to take reasonable steps to prevent the connection of stormwater to the wastewater system.

Sections 9.13 of the Council's Wastewater Bylaw require private drains to be maintained to ensure there are no defects that might allow infiltration.

Section 195 of the Act stipulates that a local authority remains liable for compliance with the Resource Management Act in relation to discharges made to the sewer network.

Resource consents for discharges from wastewater treatment plants have volumetric limits, which can be exceeded if excessive rain water enters the sewer reticulation network.

Overflows from sewer reticulation networks breach the Resource Management Act 1991, unless they are consented.

Policy

1.0 Water Supply Connections

Problems occur with older water supply connections that are typically constructed from metal pipe. Corrosion of the pipes can present problems with leakage and reduced flow and pressure to properties. Mandatory Council performance measures introduced by the Department of Internal Affairs in 2015 require reporting on:

- The average consumption of drinking water per day per resident; and
- The number of complaints received about drinking water pressure or flow.

It is important to establish a methodology on how to manage the renewal of both supply pipes and service pipes as a tool for meeting these performance measures.

- 1.1 When the Council replaces a service pipe it will advise the property owner of the condition of the supply pipe if it is considered to be in poor condition. Council will then initiate monitoring of the flow onto the property.
- 1.2 The Council may use water meters to check water consumption of properties. If the consumption is considered excessive the Council will give notice to the property owner in writing that water is being wasted on the property, and ask for the situation to be rectified, quoting the provisions of Section 192 of the Act.
- 1.3 If water continues to be wasted, a second written notice will be given, asking for the problem to be rectified.
- 1.4 If the problem has not been rectified 8 (eight) weeks after the issue of the notice in Section 1.2, and the second notice in accordance with Section 1.3 has not resulted in an immediate commitment to rectify the problem, the flow to the property will be restricted as provided for in Section 193 of the Act. Costs associated with introducing and removing flow restrictors will be charged directly to the property owner.
- 1.5 The Council will offer financial incentive and support for property owners to complete the work requested, as set out in Section 6 of this Policy.

2.0 Water manifold boxes and metering

Installing a manifold box when a water service pipe is renewed has benefits to the operation and future development of the water supply. It allows a water meter to be installed to monitor water consumption to a property where excessive usage is suspected. It also allows the installation of a simple and cost effective permanent water meter, should the Council adopt universal water metering in the future.

- 2.1 When a water service pipe is renewed a manifold box will be installed.
- 2.2 If the Council suspects excessive consumption may be occurring on a property a manifold and meter may be installed.
- 2.3 All new domestic subdivisions will have a manifold installed, at the developer's cost.

3.0 Property electrically earthed to the water system

It was common practice, before the 1960's, to earth the electrical system of a house to the metal (normally galvanised) water supply pipe. The water supply pipe may be electrically connected to the service pipe and the water main too, if it is metal. Working on or renewing any part of this system is hazardous and the person working on these pipes are at risk of electric shocks.

If electrically-insulating plastic pipe is used as a replacement, the property's electrical earth system may be compromised, creating a hazard for the property owner.

Note that electrical earths of this type are not permitted under current electrical regulations.

- 3.1 The Council discourages properties from being electrically-earthed by connection to the water supply system because it creates a potential safety hazard.
- 3.2 When the Council renews water mains and service pipes it will advise property owners of the works and possible electrical safety implications, should their property be earthed through the water system.
- 3.3 If, as part of the Council's works, hazardous electrical currents are found in a pipe that may have originated from a property, Council will advise the property owner in writing, recommending that he/she engages a qualified electrician to check and rectify any issues.
- 3.4 The Council will allow a 6 (six) week period following the notification in 3.3, to allow the property owner to undertake any electrical remedial work before it completes work to the water network that may compromise the property's electrical earth.
- 3.5 Letters and notifications sent to the property owner in relation to electrical safety will also be copied to the property file held by the Council.

4.0 Cross Boundary Connections on Private Property

There are many instances where water connections have been made between one or more properties on the customer's side of the point of supply. There are often no records of where this occurs. This has resulted in bills being disputed by businesses where a water meter has been installed and subsequently been shown to be feeding more than one property. Complaints are also received about loss of service when the common water supply connection to multiple properties is shut down by the owner of the first property that the pipe passes over.

- 4.1 When properties are found to have cross-boundary connections this will be communicated to the property owners, together with any resulting limitations on the level of service that the Council can deliver. A proposal will be made by the Council on the preferred method to remedy the situation. This will be noted on the relevant property files held by the Council.
- 4.2 Connection to a new point of supply will be at the customer's discretion, unless it is required by the Council for one of the reasons in clause 4.3.



- 4.3 The Council may require property owners to connect to a designated point of supply in the following instances:
- 4.3.1 If a pipe network between private properties has more than one connection to the mains, and backflow prevention is required to any of those properties.
- 4.3.2 If metering of an extraordinary supply is not possible due to the pipework configuration on the property owner's side of the point of supply.
- 4.4 The cost of any work on the customer's side of the point of supply will be at his/her cost.
- 4.5 The Council, where appropriate, will install a new point of supply for each property, at the Council's cost.

5.0 Wastewater Connections

Surface water can enter the wastewater pipe network either by inflow from direct connection from roofs or paved areas, or by ground water infiltration into a pipe through defects in the pipe. Inflow happens whenever there is rainfall, but infiltration becomes worse as ground water levels rise, particularly in the winter. Managing inflow and infiltration is essential to prevent network overflows, remain within discharge consent limits, maintain optimum treatment and minimise operating costs.

- 5.1 The Council will use its existing authority in the Wastewater Bylaw and the Act to access private property to determine whether connections are compliant with the Bylaw.
- 5.2 When the Council has evidence of excessive flow entering the wastewater sewer network via a sewer connection, the property owner will be given notice in writing, stating the action to be taken to rectify the problem.
- 5.3 If the works have not been completed by the property owner, a second written notice will be given, asking for the problem to be rectified.
- 5.4 If, after the second notice has been given and a period of 8 (eight) weeks has passed since first, bringing the issue to the attention of the property owner, the Council will progress the matter using the provisions of the Wastewater Bylaw and the Act.
- 5.5 The Council will offer financial incentive and support for property owners to complete the work requested, as set out in Section 6 of this Policy.

6.0 Financial Incentive and Support

- 6.1 Many of the scenarios in this Policy will be associated with older properties where the owners may have a lower ability to pay. The Council will offer a financial incentive and support if:
- Support is indicated as being available in one of the preceding sections;
 - The Council has requested work to be undertaken on private property;



- The property owner responds promptly and in good faith to the Council's request;
- Two quotations have been obtained by the property owner from registered drain layers;
- The lowest quotation has a value in excess of \$1,000 including GST; and
- The property is occupied by the owner.

6.2 If all of the requirements of 6.1 have been satisfied, the Council will contribute \$250 or 10% of the total approved costs (whichever is the highest) and the balance of the works is to be paid over either one or two years (term to be agreed with Council prior) interest free as a sundry debtor. Property owners will be asked for a commitment in writing. The remainder of any debt must be paid in full if the property is sold and/or changes ownership within that time frame.

7.0 Definitions

Act means the Local Government Act 2002.

Authorised Officer means any person appointed by the Chief Executive of the Council for purposes of acting as an Authorised Officer under this Policy.

Backflow means the unplanned reversal of flow of water or mixtures of water and contaminants into the water supply system.

Connection means the pipe which leads from the main, normally in the street, to a building either supplying water or taking sewage away.

Council means the South Taranaki District Council.

Domestic supply means a residential or unmetered business premises within an urban water supply area.

Infiltration means water entering a public sewer or private drain from groundwater through defects such as poor joints and cracks in pipes or manholes. It does not include inflow.

Inflow means water discharged into a private drain from non-complying connections or other drain-laying faults. It includes stormwater entering through illegal downpipe connections or from low gulley traps.

Main means the principal water or sewer pipe, typically located in the road reserve in an urban area.

Manifold means a small underground chamber, with a tap to turn the supply off, which a water meter is capable of being installed into.

Point of Discharge means the point on the public sewer which marks the boundary of responsibility between the customer and the Council, as defined in Section 7 of the Council's Wastewater Bylaw.

Point of Supply means the point along the water pipe leading from the Council's water main to the premises, which marks the boundary of responsibility between the customer and the Council, irrespective of property boundaries.

Premises include the following:

- a) A property or allotment which is held under a separate certificate of title or for which a separate certificate of title may be issued and in respect to which a building consent has been or may be issued;
- b) A building or part of a building that has been defined as an individual unit by a cross-lease, unit title or company lease and for which a certificate of title is available; or
- c) Land held in public ownership (eg reserve) for a particular purpose.

Private drain is the sewer drain belonging to the property owner and not in the ownership, maintenance or control of the Council. Sections 459 - 462 inclusive of the Local Government Act 1974 apply to private drains. Private drains shall be constructed according to the relevant provisions of the Building Act 2004 and codes.

Service Pipe means the section of water pipe between a water main and the point of supply.

Service Valve (Toby) means the valve on the water supply connection which allows the property to be isolated from the water main.

Supply Pipe means the section of pipe between the point of supply and the customer's premises through which water is conveyed to the premises.

Water Supply Bylaw means the South Taranaki District Council Water Supply Bylaw 2013 and any amendments.

Water Supply Connection is the pipe which leads from the Council's water main to the premises. This is normally part owned by the property owner and the Council with ownership changing at the Point of Supply, which is typically (but not always) at the property boundary.

Wastewater Bylaw means the South Taranaki District Council Wastewater Bylaw 2013 and any amendments.

8.0 Contacts

Engineering Operations Manager
South Taranaki District Council 06 278 0555 or 0800 111 323

9.0 Review of Policy

9.1 This Policy shall be reviewed every five (5) years to ensure the Policy is effective and efficient at achieving the objectives.

9.2 The first review of this Policy will be undertaken to align with the review of the Council's Water Supply Bylaw and Wastewater Bylaw.