

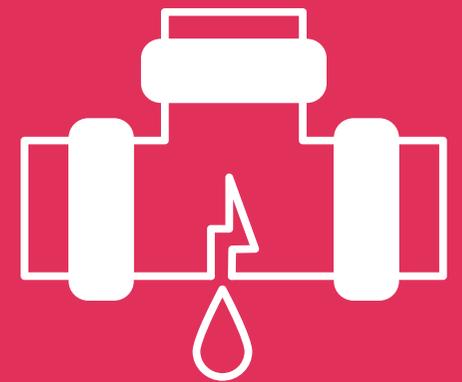
CODE OF PRACTICE

northern ireland
water



Delivering what matters

Dealing with Leaks



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We're committed to giving you, our customer, the best possible service – all day, every day. With a network of 27,700 kilometres of water mains, serving approximately 883,000 homes and businesses across Northern Ireland, we all have an interest in using water efficiently and reducing leaks.

We want everyone to take leaking pipes seriously and in this leaflet, we explain:

- Who is responsible for pipes
- How to check for a leak
- How we manage leaks
- How we adjust bills affected by a leak.

Certain parts of this Code of Practice only apply to non-domestic customers who have a water meter and pay measured charges.

All our information leaflets and letters can be requested in the following formats:

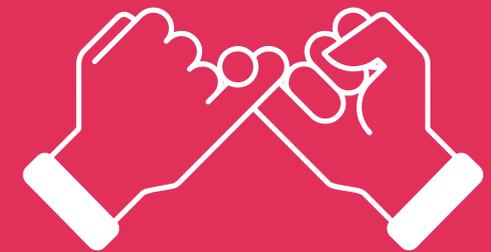
- Braille
- large print
- CD and audio tape.

The information leaflets can all be downloaded from niwater.com

Our Promises: at a glance

- We'll check for leaks on your supply pipe when we fit a meter, and if we find a leak, we'll fix it free of charge if we can access it without further digging.
- We'll provide advice on how to find leakage on your supply.
- If you've had a leak on your non-domestic supply, you can apply to have the sewerage part of your bill adjusted.
- If you've had a leak on your mixed-use supply, you can apply to have the water and sewerage parts of your bill adjusted.
- When we read your meter and your consumption shows an unusual and significant increase, but doesn't require additional investigation, we'll alert you to this, usually in writing, within 3 working days of the reading being taken.
- We'll investigate any leaks you let us know about and will repair them, if they're found to be our responsibility.
- We'll send you a Leakage Notice if we find a leak on your private pipework during our programme of checking for leaks.

This Leakage Notice will outline the actions you need to take along with relevant Frequently Asked Questions. We aim to issue Leakage Notices within 5 working days of the leak being discovered.



Our pipes and how we manage leakage

Some people may think that because we have high levels of rainfall in Northern Ireland, we should have a plentiful supply of water. The reality is that there is a limit on the amount of water that can be stored and treated to make it safe to use. The efficient use of water and the timely repair of leaks is of great importance to help ensure that water supplies are available when needed. From an environmental and economic perspective, any waste of treated water also wastes the energy and other natural resources that are used to treat and distribute the water to you.

We're responsible for repairing leaks on our water pipes. This includes the water mains and that portion of the supply pipe between the water main and property boundary. This is shown in the diagram on page 5.

At Northern Ireland Water, we're working hard to reduce, to an economic level, the amount of water lost through leaks from our pipes. The economic level is the balance between the cost of reducing leakage and the cost of the water saved.

What we do

- We manage the supply of water by dividing the network into controlled areas.
- We use meters and sensors to monitor the flows through our network of mains water pipes carefully. An alarm will alert us when the flows exceed normal operating range. This helps to identify areas of suspected leakage.
- We regularly check and repair all our mains water pipes. Our Leakage Technicians listen to parts of the pipework and can hear if water is

leaking from the system. This helps to locate the leak.

- We report our leakage reduction performance annually to the Utility Regulator.
- We manage water pressure to minimise leakage while ensuring that it is sufficient to meet requirements.
- We consider the condition of a water main, in terms of leakage levels, when deciding whether to replace it.
- If you are a non-domestic customer and we find that a meter reading shows an unusual and significant increase, we will alert you to this, usually in writing. This may indicate leakage on your supply, and it is your responsibility to check for and repair any leaks.



How you can help us – reporting leaks

We actively carry out leak detection work, but our network of pipes is vast. If you see a water leak on a road or footpath, please don't ignore it.

You can help by notifying us using the simple online form on our website: www.niwater.com/report-a-leak-or-burst-pipe

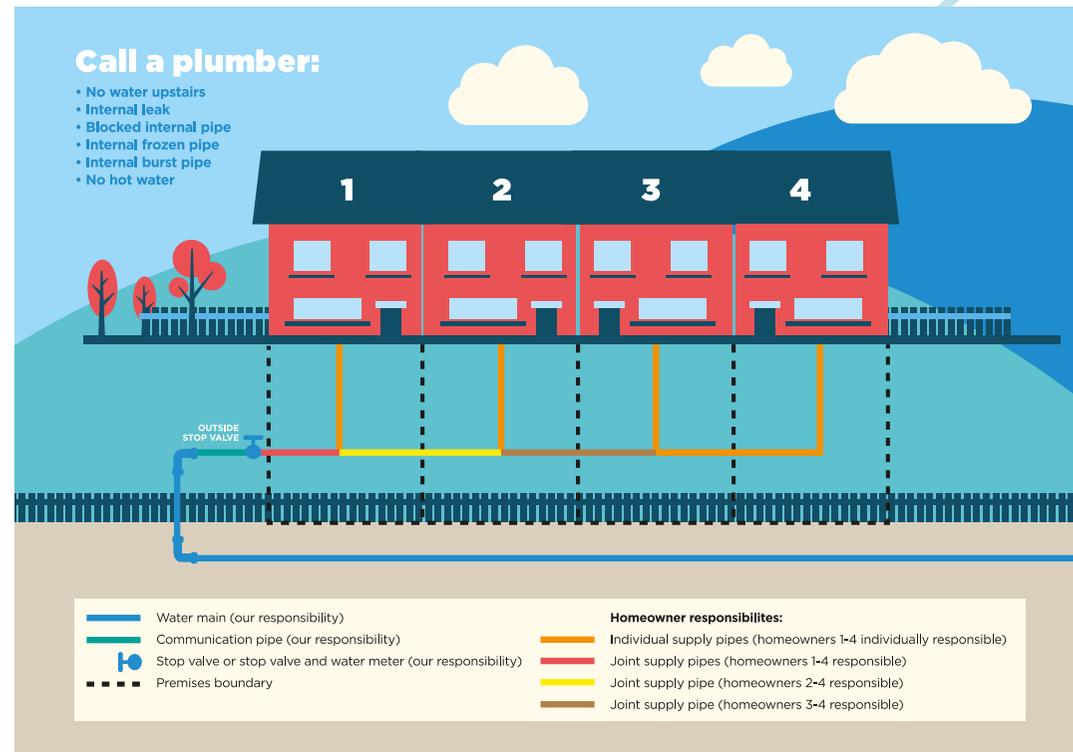
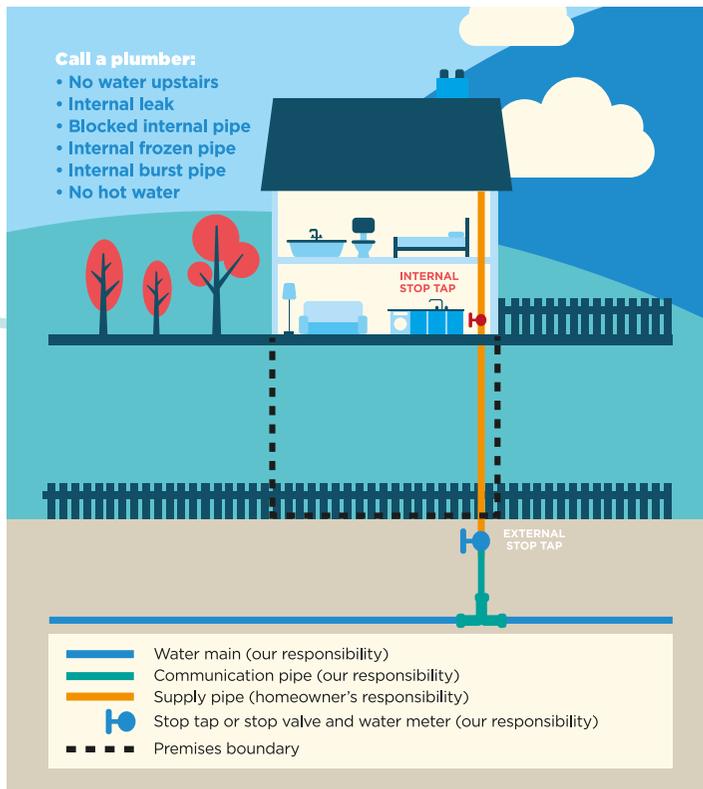
Alternatively, you can telephone us on **Leakline 08000 282011**. Lines are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week and calls are free of charge.

We are very grateful when customers alert us to a leak in their area. We'll investigate and carry out any necessary repairs.

**If you spot
a leak, please
report it online
Report A Leak
Or Burst Pipe**

Your pipes and responsibilities

It is very important for you to be aware that you have responsibilities to maintain the supply pipe that delivers water to your property. The diagram below shows who is responsible for which pipes.



The diagram above provides an overview of the various pipes involved and who is responsible for them.

What we're responsible for

We're usually responsible for looking after the water main and the pipe that runs from the water main to the boundary of the street, including the stopcock or meter (which we also own).

This portion of the service pipe is known as the 'communication pipe'. We're responsible for repairing any leaks on the communication pipe, stopcock or meter.

What you're responsible for

You're usually responsible for any pipe or pipes between the boundary of the street in which the water main is laid (or from the water main if it is not laid in the street) and your property. This is called the 'supply pipe'. You'll be

responsible for any leak on the supply pipe, including pipework under and inside your property.

In some cases, the supply pipe may have been laid in private ground owned by somebody else. You're responsible for the supply pipe, and you should ensure that you have permission to enter the property to maintain the pipe. This may require a formal agreement between yourself and the other property owner(s).

Sometimes more than one property may be connected through a common supply pipe. Where this is the case, a leak may affect the flow and pressure of the water supply to some or all properties sharing the common supply pipe.

Responsibility for such common supply pipes, including the costs for any repairs, is a private matter between the property owners who share the supply pipe. This may mean that, although only one customer has noticed a problem, a number of neighbours are affected and have to share any costs.



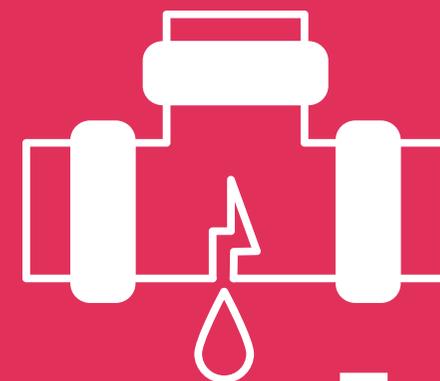


Is there a leak on your pipe?

Water leaks are a waste of a precious resource and, if left to run, may cause damage to your property. The cost of putting right long-term damage is always far greater than dealing with a leak promptly, so it is in everyone's interest to prevent and repair leaks. A number of signs may show there is a leak on your supply pipe.

These include:

- hearing running water
- seeing running water or wet areas
- an unusual, lush growth of grass or plants near pipework, especially during dry weather
- poor water pressure in your property
- higher than normal consumption on your measured bill (for non-domestic customers) that cannot be explained.



How you can help us – repairing leaks

If there's a leak on your supply pipe, it's your responsibility to find it and repair it. You may need to employ the services of a leak detection specialist or a plumber to do this. In the interests of consumer protection, we recommend that you always use competent tradespeople who are members of a relevant accreditation scheme.

The following websites may be helpful:

www.needaplumber.org
www.watersafe.org.uk

Some older supply pipes may be in poor condition and therefore it may be more sensible to replace the supply pipe, rather than simply repairing the leak itself as it's quite likely that further leaks will occur.

We have a legal right to insist that you repair any leaks on your supply pipe. We hope you don't ever have a leak, but if we suspect that there's a leak on your pipe, we'll do the following:

- Ask you to repair the leak.
- In addition, we're likely to serve a legal notice that orders you to

repair the leak. The notice usually allows you 28 days to carry out the repair.

- If we've served a legal notice and you haven't completed the repair within the period of the notice, we will carry out the repair and charge you for all of the costs.
- In extreme cases (if the escaping water is hazardous or causing harm to people or property), we can disconnect the water supply until you carry out the repair.

Non-Domestic Customers: Leakage and your measured bill

Checking for leaks before we install a meter

When we install a meter on an existing supply, we will check to see if there is any leakage from your private supply pipe. We'll repair any leakage from your private supply pipe found during the meter installation process free of charge, provided we can do so without any further digging. If additional digging is required, you will be responsible for finding and repairing the leak yourself.

Normally, we won't start to record your water consumption through the meter until the leak has been repaired.

Finding a leak on your supply

We recommend you keep a check on the amount of water you are using by taking regular meter readings, particularly if you have a long supply pipe, or following periods of exceptional or prolonged cold weather. If your recorded consumption suddenly increases, this may indicate a leak on your pipework.

We recommend that you carry out the following checks:

For underground pipes

- locate meter
- close internal stop tap
- if meter is still recording a flow, investigate further and look for patches of unusually damp ground.

For internal plumbing

- during a period of no water use, check meter
- if meter is recording a flow, close internal stop tap
- if meter stops recording a flow, check internal pipework and appliances.

For guidance on how to read a water meter, see our Code of Practice on Billing & Metering for Non-Domestic Customers or visit our website: www.niwater.com/read-your-meter



Liability for leakage costs on water

Where a leak occurs between the meter and point of use, water will be recorded as consumption on the meter and may result in a high bill. All water supplied through a meter for non-domestic purposes, whether consumed or lost through leakage, will be billed. This includes where there is a short period of unusually high consumption which then reduces. Often this can be due to a previous estimated read that was too low.

Unless a test shows that the meter is not recording properly (see our Code of Practice on Metering & Billing for Non-Domestic Customers), this will be used as the basis for your bill.

Liability for leakage costs on sewerage

The sewerage charges on a bill are directly linked to the volume of water recorded. This assumes that 95% of water supplied is returned as sewerage unless we have agreed a different Non-Return to Sewer allowance. If there has

been a leak you can apply to have the sewerage charges on your bill adjusted to take account of the water that leaked and did not reach the sewer.

This can be requested each time a leak occurs, provided it can be demonstrated that any previous leaks were properly repaired. The sewerage charges on the bill will be averaged for the period of the leak, based on your previous normal consumption records. This is subject to the following conditions:

- The leak occurred on underground, or hidden internal pipework within your property boundary.
- The leak has been fixed within 4 weeks of the date it was found.
- There is no evidence that the leak has been caused by your negligence or wilful damage.
- A claim is made within 6 weeks of the date the leak was fixed, or the date the bill issues, whichever is later.
- Any allowance granted will relate to

the period from the date of the last bill (based on an actual read) until the date of its repair.

It's your responsibility to fix any leak on your pipework as soon as you find it. If you don't own your property, your landlord may be responsible for fixing the leak, but the bill payer will still be liable, even if the leak is on a shared supply pipe within the property. If necessary, you should ask your landlord, or the property owner, to carry out the repair.

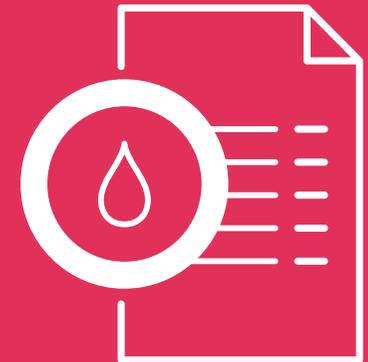
If the leak occurs on a portion of the pipe that Northern Ireland Water has responsibility for (e.g., between the meter and your property boundary), both the water and sewerage elements of the bill will be averaged. Additionally, if such a leak occurs because of damage caused by us or our contractors, you will not be financially liable and we will repair any damage caused.

Leakage on the domestic part of a mixed-use supply

If you have a single metered supply providing water to a non-domestic and domestic mixed-use property, and a leak occurs on the domestic part of the supply, you can apply to have both the water and sewerage elements of your bill adjusted. The same conditions apply as above, and you will have to show that the leak was repaired. We may visit your property for you to show us where the leak had been and confirm that this was on the domestic portion. If leaks happen again, we may require you to separate the supplies.

Our Promises

- We'll check for leaks on your supply pipe when we fit a meter, and if we find a leak, will fix it free of charge if we can access it without further digging.
 - We'll provide advice on how to find leakage on your supply.
- If you've had a leak on your non-domestic supply, you can apply to have the sewerage part of your bill adjusted.
 - If you've had a leak on your mixed-use supply, you can apply to have the water and sewerage parts of your bill adjusted.
 - When we read your meter and your consumption shows an unusual and significant increase, but does not require additional investigation, we will alert you to this, usually in writing, within 3 working days of the reading being taken.
 - We'll investigate any leaks you let us know about and will repair them if found to be our responsibility.
- We'll send you a Leakage Notice if we find a leak on your private pipework during our programme of checking for leaks. This Leakage Notice will outline the actions you need to take along with relevant Frequently Asked Questions. We aim to issue Leakage Notices within 5 working days of the leak being discovered.





Some easy ways you can save water

- Turn off the tap. Simply turning off the tap while brushing your teeth, washing your hands or shaving can save over 6 litres of water every minute!
- Let the 'yellow mellow'. Toilet flushing is one of the biggest water users in most homes. Consider only flushing the toilet when you really need to. Adding a toilet cistern bag to your cistern will reduce the amount of water used in every flush.
- Take shorter showers. Why not challenge yourself and your family to shower one minute quicker? In a year you could save up to 10,000 litres of water!
- Take a shower instead of a bath. One bath can use up to 100 litres of water, whereas an efficient shower uses under 50 litres. But remember: power showers can use more water than baths.
- Use a bowl for washing vegetables. A running kitchen tap can use up to 20 litres of water every minute. Reduce water waste by using a bowl to wash and prepare your vegetables. Then you can use the water to rinse your recycling.
- Make full use of your washing machine. Half-load programmes use more than half the water and energy of a full load, so wait until the machine is full before switching it on.
- Lawns are great survivors. Even when they look dry and brown, they'll spring back with the first heavy rain, so do avoid watering them wherever possible. Collect rainwater in a waterbutt. The water can then be used to water your lawn and plants when a dry spell hits.
- Fix leaking taps. A dripping tap can waste more than 60 litres of water per week.
- Keep a jug of water in the fridge. Planning ahead means there is no need to run the water until it gets cold.
- Fill the kettle with only as much water as you need.

**For more tips
on how to save
water, please visit
our website:
[www.niwater.com
/how-to-save
-water/](http://www.niwater.com/how-to-save-water/)**

Bogus callers

Occasionally criminals visit people's homes and claim to be working for us. These people are 'bogus callers'. They can be men or women and may try to trick you by saying there is an urgent problem with your water. All our staff and contractors working on our behalf carry identity cards with their photo and the NI Water logo on it.

If we are carrying out work, our staff may need to go into your property. Always ask to see their identity card. If someone comes to your door claiming to work for us, please do the following:

- Check that your windows and front and back doors are locked.
- Stop and think, 'Am I expecting anyone?'

- Ask the caller to put their identity card through your letterbox, rather than opening the door.
- If you have one, attach your door chain before you open your door.

If the identity card is genuine, it will have the following information on it:

- a picture of the person at your door
- a unique serial number
- the date the card was issued
- the person's name
- the person's signature
- our logo.

You can check that the person is who they say they are by phoning Quick Check on 101. Your call will be answered by a trained police call handler who will take the details from you and will then

contact Northern Ireland Water to determine whether the caller is genuine. Our staff will not mind waiting while you check their details. If you're not sure, don't open your door.

Password scheme

If you're on our Customer Care Register, you can ask for a password to help you identify our staff. Please arrange a password with us. Our staff will always use this password when they visit you.

If someone claims to work for us but doesn't know your password, don't let them in. Instead, please get in touch with us and we'll check to see if the caller really works for us.

QUICK CHECK

Call the police
on 101 for quick check



What to do if you're unhappy with our services

It's important to us always to provide the best possible service. So, if you ever feel we've fallen short of this, we'd like to hear from you. We'll work with you to put things right as quickly as possible and will always try to use your feedback to improve things for our customers.

For details of how we handle complaints, please refer to Our Complaints Procedure, which is available on our website.

Confidentiality

We treat all information you give us securely and hold it in strict confidence. Access to information by employees and others working

on behalf of Northern Ireland Water will be on a 'need to know' basis only. Where we hold personal information, it will be processed in compliance with the Data Protection legislation.

If you authorise somebody else to contact us on your behalf, we may include personal information where relevant to the response.

Independent help and advice from the Consumer Council

If you remain unhappy with how we initially dealt with your complaint or would like free, independent advice, you can contact the Consumer Council. The Consumer Council has

the power to act on your behalf and investigate your complaint about our services. It can also provide assistance if you are making a complaint.

Consumer Council

Floor 3, Seatem House
28-32 Alfred Street Belfast
BT2 8EN

 **Phone:** 0800 121 6022

 **Textphone:** 028 9025 1600

 **Fax:** 028 9025 1663

 **Email:** contact@consumercouncil.org.uk

 **Website:** www.consumercouncil.org.uk

Further Information

This Code of Practice is part of a set of information leaflets about us and our services. The other Codes of Practice in the set include:

‘Sewerage Services’: This gives you information about the sewerage system, who is responsible for pipework, flooded sewers, new connections and our right to enter your property.

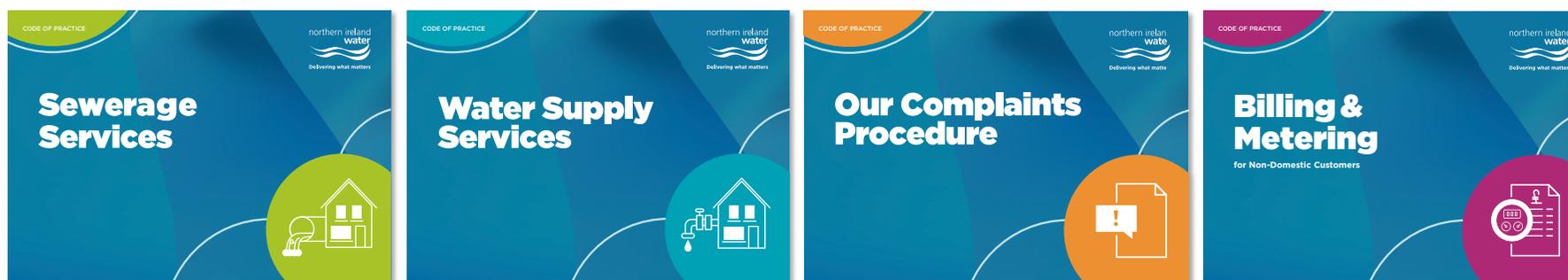
‘Water Supply Services’: This gives you information on our code of practice for water services.

‘Our Complaints Procedure’: This gives you information on who to contact and how we will manage your complaint.

‘Work on Private Land’: This gives you information on our code of practice if we need to work on private land.

‘Billing & Metering for Non-Domestic Customers’: This gives you information on our codes of practice on billing and metering arrangements.

We offer a range of other information leaflets, which are all available on our website.



Other Useful Contacts

The Utility Regulator

If your complaint is about our standards of service, non-compliance with our licence conditions or statutory obligations and we haven't resolved it, you may wish to contact the Utility Regulator. This is the independent non-ministerial government department responsible for regulating Northern Ireland Water.

 **The Utility Regulator**
Queens House
14 Queen Street Belfast BT1 6ED

 **Phone:** 028 9031 1575

 **Fax:** 028 9031 1740

 **Email:** info@uregni.gov.uk

 **Website:** www.uregni.gov.uk



 **Northern Ireland Water**
PO Box 1026
Belfast BT1 9DJ

 **Waterline**
03457 440088

 **Text Relay Service**
03457 440088

 **Self-Service**
<https://digitalservices.niwater.com>

 **Email**
waterline@niwater.com

 **Web Chat**
www.niwater.com/contact-us/

 **Facebook**
www.facebook.com/niwater/

 **Twitter**
www.twitter.com/niwnews

 **Website**
www.niwater.com