



# The Water Supply

(Water Fittings)

## Regulations

(Northern Ireland) 2009

What are they and how do they affect you?



**This leaflet provides information about the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 and how they affect you.**

## **What are the Water Fittings Regulations?**

The Water Fittings Regulations hereafter referred to as the regulations, are national requirements for the design, installation and maintenance of plumbing systems, water fittings and water-using appliances. Their purpose is to **prevent waste, misuse, undue consumption or erroneous measurement** of water and, most importantly to prevent **contamination** of drinking water.

## **Where do they apply?**

All plumbing systems, water fittings and water-using equipment in all types of premises supplied or to be supplied from the public water supply come under the regulations. The regulations apply from the point where the water enters the property's underground service pipe.

## **Who has to comply with the Regulations?**

Owners and occupiers of premises and anyone who installs plumbing systems or water fittings have a legal duty to ensure that the systems satisfy the regulations. In most cases advanced notice must be given of proposed installations, so architects, building developers and plumbers have to follow the regulations on behalf of the future owners or occupiers.

## **Enforcement**

The Government requires NI Water to enforce the regulations. NI Water can provide copies of its enforcement policy. NI Water will undertake inspections of new and existing installations to check that the regulations are being met. Where breaches of the regulations are found, NI Water will require them to be remedied as soon as practicable.

Where breaches pose a risk to health, the water supply to the premises may be disconnected immediately to protect the health of occupants or others fed from the same public supply. It is a criminal offence to breach the regulations and offenders may face prosecution.

## **How do the regulations affect you?**

1. Your plumbing system must be installed and maintained to comply with the regulations.
2. You must prevent contamination of drinking water.
3. You must give advanced notification of installation work.
4. You will benefit from using an Approved Plumbing Contractor.

### **1. Plumbing systems to comply**

Plumbing systems must be designed, installed and maintained to meet the requirements of the regulations.

Plumbing fittings and materials must be of an appropriate quality and standard and suitable for the circumstances in which they are used. It is not illegal to sell non-compliant fittings and appliances but to install and use one on a system supplied by NI Water would be, so check before you purchase. The regulations list the routes by which customers can demonstrate fittings are of an appropriate quality and standard. There are a number of testing and certification schemes in existence, these include the Water Regulations Approval Scheme (WRAS) water fittings and materials directory, the Kiwa UK Regulation 4 Product Approval Scheme and the NSF Reg4 Certification scheme. Products listed by these schemes meet the requirements of Regulation 4 but still need to be suitable for the circumstances in which they are used and installed and used correctly.

Plumbing must be properly installed and maintained to protect water quality, to ensure safety, ease of access for maintenance, detection of leakage, protection against damage or freezing etc. If you are carrying out your own installation work ensure you know what requirements you must meet. If you are employing someone else, consider using an approved contractor who will guarantee compliance of the new installation. The regulations cannot be applied retrospectively if a water fitting was installed in compliance with the Water Regulations in force at the time. However if NI Water considers a water fitting poses a significant risk of contamination or waste of water, we can insist on improvements using The Water and Sewerage Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006.

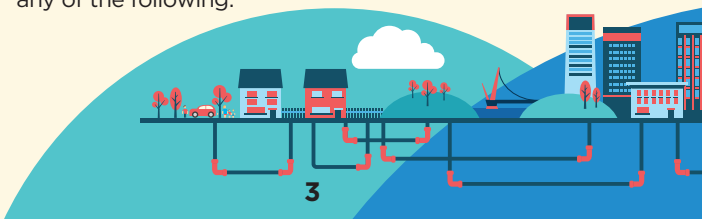
## **2. Prevention of backflow**

Backflow occurs when water flows in the opposite to intended or normal direction of flow. Where water or water-using equipment is used with fluids or materials which could contaminate the water, there must be adequate protection to stop backflow of potentially contaminated water into other parts of the system, especially drinking water outlets.

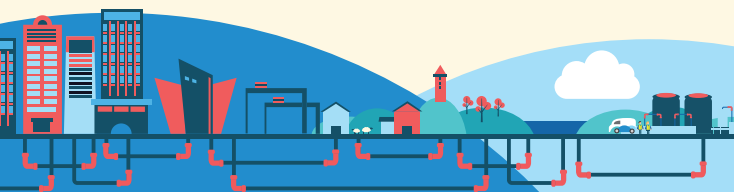
The regulations define Fluid Risk Categories according to the type of contaminants which are present and specify the appropriate type of device or arrangement which must be fitted to protect against backflow.

## **3. Advanced notification**

In most cases, before any proposed installation starts, the installer, owner or occupier must obtain NI Water's consent by giving advanced notice of the work. This applies to water system installations in connection with any of the following:



1. The erection of a building or other structure, not being a pond or swimming pool.
2. The extension or alteration of a water system in any premises other than a house.#
3. A material change of use of any premises.
4. The installation of:
  - (a) A bath having a capacity, as measured to the centre line of overflow, of more than 230 litres;\*
  - (b) A bidet or WC with an ascending spray or flexible hose;#
  - (c) A shower unit of a type specified by the Regulator (none are currently specified);\*
  - (d) A pump or booster drawing more than 12 litres per minute;
  - (e) A unit which incorporates reverse osmosis;
  - (f) A water treatment unit which produces a waste water discharge or which requires the use of water for regeneration or cleaning;
  - (g) A type BA device or other mechanical device for protection against backflow in a fluid category 4 or 5;
  - (h) A garden watering system unless designed to be operated by hand;\*
  - (i) Any water system laid outside a building and either less than 750mm or more than 1350mm below ground level;
  - (j) Greywater, recycled water, reclaimed water and rainwater harvesting systems;
  - (k) Water systems for fire fighting, including domestic sprinklers;
  - (l) A flexible shower hose or other flexible outlet for use in conjunction with a WC;#
  - (m) A 'shower-toilet' or 'bidet-toilet' where, either as part of the WC itself or as an addition or adaptation of it, a stream of water is provided from below the spillover level of the WC pan for personal cleansing;#
5. The construction of ponds or swimming pools with a capacity, individually or together, greater than 10,000 litres which are designed to be replenished by automatic means and are to be filled with water supplied by a water undertaker.\*



## For notification, the following information must be sent to NI Water:

- The name and address of the person giving notice and, if different, of the person to whom the consent should be sent.
- A description of the proposed work and any related change of use of premises.
- The location of the premises and their use or intended use.
- Except for items marked (\*) above, a plan of that part of the premises which relates to the proposed work and a diagram showing the pipe work and fittings to be installed.
- The plumbing contractor's name and address, if an approved plumber is to do the work.

Consent will not be withheld unreasonably, and may be granted subject to conditions, which must be followed. If consent is not given within ten working days, it is deemed to have been granted. This does not alter the obligation upon the installer and owner or occupier to see that the regulations are fully met. Notification forms are available for customers to download from the NI Water website.

### 4. Approved contractors

An approved contractor, often called an approved plumber, will provide a certificate to state that their installation or maintenance work satisfies the regulations. In the event that this certified work contravenes the regulations, the owner or occupier can use the certificate as a legal defence against prosecution. Installation by an approved contractor of items marked (#) in the list overleaf does not have to receive prior consent but on completion, compliance certificate copies must be sent to NI Water and the person who asked for the work to be done.

Details of approved contractors who have demonstrated their experience of plumbing work and knowledge of the regulations and have liability insurance cover are available via the NI Water website, the Water Regulations Advisory Scheme (WRAS) and WaterSafe.

WaterSafe is a free online directory and national accreditation body for competent and qualified plumbers in Northern Ireland and GB.



# Where can I get a copy of the regulations and further advice?

The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) are available from NI Water.


[www.niwater.com/water-fittings-regulations](http://www.niwater.com/water-fittings-regulations)


[www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2009/255/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2009/255/contents/made)


NI Water cannot provide a design service for installations, but WRAS offers a free technical advice service for general questions about the regulations and will try to answer queries from customers about local matters relating to the regulations.


## Useful contacts:

### Northern Ireland Water

 PO Box 1026 Belfast, BT1 9DJ

 Waterline: 03457 440088


 Text Relay: 03457 440088  
(For customers with hearing difficulties)


 Email: [waterline@niwater.com](mailto:waterline@niwater.com)

 [www.niwater.com](http://www.niwater.com)

### Water Regs UK

The Water Regs UK website lists contact details for Water Fittings Regulations departments in all water suppliers.


 Tel: 0333 207 9030


 [info@waterregsuk.co.uk](mailto:info@waterregsuk.co.uk)

 [www.waterregsuk.co.uk](http://www.waterregsuk.co.uk)




### WaterSafe:


 Tel: 0333 207 9030

 [www.watersafe.org.uk](http://www.watersafe.org.uk)



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