

# Where does your water go?

Your guide to our sewerage  
and waste water services.



YorkshireWater

# Many customers think we just supply clean, fresh water to their taps. However, our sewerage and waste water services are an important part of what we do too.

This handy leaflet tells you about our sewerage system and how we treat waste water. It also explains:

- What to do if a sewer floods
- What to do if your home is flooded
- Connections to the sewerage system
- Details about the Environment Agency and Ofwat.

On the back cover of this leaflet you'll find all the ways you can get in touch with us, along with a full list of other free customer guides about all the services we offer.

The Yorkshire region is both vast and well populated (around two million households).

Our waste water services cover areas from towns like Whitby in the north, Chesterfield in the south; and from Hull in the east to Skipton in the west.

We collect waste water via 52,000 km of sewers and treat it at over 600 Waste Water Treatment Works. This is done in order to ensure that we meet demanding environmental standards for both river and coastal life.

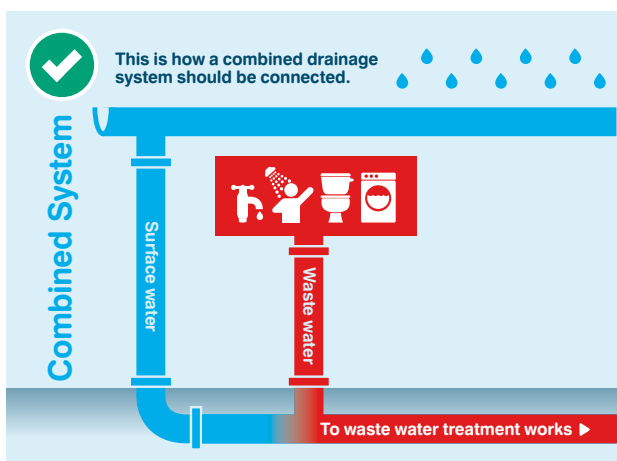
We operate under a licence granted by the Secretary of State for the Environment and monitored by the industry regulator, Ofwat and the Environment Agency (EA).

## What is the sewerage system?

It's the system of underground pipes used to collect and carry rainwater, waste water and trade waste away from homes to a Waste Water Treatment Works or other place for disposal.

There are two types of drainage networks and two types of domestic drainage pipes:

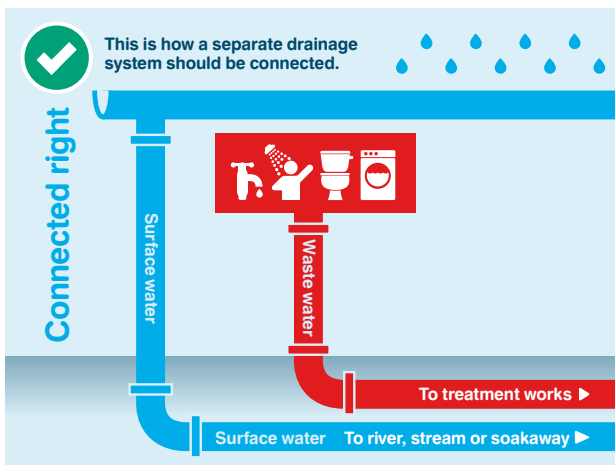
- 1. Combined drainage** is where both rainwater and waste water drain into the same pipe (a combined sewer). The combined rain and waste water is taken to the waste water treatment works where the waste water is cleaned so that it can be safely returned to a river or the sea.



2. **Separate drainage** is where there are two independent sets of pipe networks that drain from a property:

**A foul water system** that collects only waste water from your toilet, bath, shower, washing machine and dishwasher. The foul water pipes (foul sewer) take this waste water to the waste water treatment works where it's cleaned so that it can be safely returned to a river or the sea.

**A surface water system** which only collects rainwater from your roof and hard standing surfaces (such as roads and pavements). The surface water pipes (surface water sewer) take the rainwater directly into a river, stream or soakaway.



## Domestic drainage pipes

1. Private drains serve just one home and are located within the home's boundary. There may also be private sewers on occasion here too.
2. Public drains sit outside the home's boundary or serve more than one house. Public drains could be laid in private land, footpaths, public roads, gardens or public open spaces.

We own and maintain public sewers. They're normally displayed on public sewer maps, which you can see at our Head Office at Western House, Halifax Road, Bradford, or at your Local Authority office.

If you notice or experience a problem relating to our sewerage system, please get in touch via any of the ways listed on the back cover.

Regarding private drains, the owners of the drain are responsible. If you experience a problem, you should contact a plumber or drainage contractor and check your insurance policy, if you have one. For further information, read our web page [yorkshirewater.com/floods](http://yorkshirewater.com/floods)



## Treating waste water

We run over 600 Waste Water Treatment Works, designed to treat expected sewage volumes and meet the standards set by the Environment Agency.

In inland areas, we usually carry out treatment in several stages and then return the treated waste water to a watercourse. In coastal areas, the treatment includes ultra violet disinfection before we return the treated waste water to the sea.

## Dealing with environmental problems

We always try to limit environmental problems such as flies, odour and noise; and if we're building a new works, we take into account the possible effects on people living nearby.

We're also carrying out an improvements programme to provide extra waste water treatment capacity, to comply with conditions set by the Environment Agency and meet river quality and coastal water quality standards. Indeed, we've contributed significantly to recent improvements in river and coastal water quality around the region.

Waste Water Treatment works are working to a higher standard than ever before. Waste water is rigorously treated prior being discharged and this has helped to improve our rivers, watercourses and coastal water.

## Monitoring the treatment process

We undertake sampling of the quality of our treated water in agreement with the Environment Agency and the results passed onto them. They are recorded in a register and are available for public inspection.

We take our responsibility to the environment very seriously, seeking to protect our beautiful rivers and beaches. For more information, please visit [yorkshirewater.com/environment](http://yorkshirewater.com/environment).



### **The Environment Agency**

Lateral, 8 City Walk, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS11 9AT



Telephone: **0370 850 6506**



E-mail: **[enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk)**

# What happens to the sewage 'sludge'?

There are strict rules about how we can dispose of the biosolids known as sewage sludge, which is a by-product of the waste water treatment process.

Where possible, we recycle it by turning it into a usable substance such as soil enhancer, topsoil substitute or even house bricks.

Some sewage sludge is spread on agricultural land. This is only permitted if both the sewage sludge and the soil meet requirements laid down in the Sludge (Use in Agriculture) Regulations.

Due to its industrial nature some sewage sludge is incinerated. A high proportion of the resulting ash is recycled, but some has to be put into landfill sites.

## Reporting a problem relating to a Waste Water Treatment works

If you experience a problem or inconvenience caused by noise, odours or flies etc, get in touch via any of the ways listed on the back cover.

## Sewer flooding

Flooding can be one of the most unpleasant things you can experience in your home. That's why we continue to work hard to make sure these incidents remain few and far between.

### What causes a sewer to flood?

There can be a number of causes.

- A blocked or collapsed sewer.
- A pumping station failure.
- Heavy or extreme rainfall.

Tree roots may also cause damage to sewers, as do unsuitable items being thrown into them – builders' rubble, baby wipes, cotton buds, nappies, fats, oils and greases.

#### Stay safe

Where possible do not walk through flood waters

- Flood waters can contain sewage as well as other risks such as syringes, etc
- Manhole covers may have been dislodged and holes may not be visible – the exposed hole could cause injury and even drowning.

Do not attempt to unblock the sewer yourself. Please wait and allow our trained technicians to deal with the situation.

If you see anything that looks dangerous, please contact us immediately.

### Preventing future flooding

We're continuing to invest significantly in order to reduce the flood risk.

Due to the complex nature of flooding, many organisations are often responsible for managing flood risk. We are working in partnership with them to tackle it more effectively.

### How we deal with sewage flooding

A small number of homes are at particular risk from flooding due to overloaded sewers, and we're investing in a programme to reduce this.

We'll let you know if your home is on our risk register, and keep you up to date on our progress.

Unfortunately, in extreme weather conditions such as major storms, we can't guarantee to prevent sewage flooding, even if we respond quickly.

However, should an incident occur, we make responding to it our top priority. We'll send an expert round to assess the problem as quickly as possible. And if sewage has entered your home, we'll treat this as a priority.

## How to help reduce the risk of flooding

One of the most common causes of sewer flooding is a 'soft blockage'. This is caused by things like wipes or nappies being flushed down the toilet and cooking fat being poured down the sink.

You can help by taking these simple precautions:

Don't wash away leftover fat, oil or greasy sauces down your sink.

It can solidify in your pipes like a block of lard, creating a blockage that stops waste water draining away. Let it cool, then pour into a suitable container and put it in the bin. Wipe pots and pans with kitchen roll before washing up or putting them in the dishwasher.

Don't flush wipes and other products down the toilet.

Toilets are only designed to remove human waste and toilet roll. Wipes of all kinds can block pipes. Even if it says 'flushable' on the packet, it's still a good idea to put them in the bin.

## What happens when a home is flooded?

Sewage flooding is very unpleasant and distressing. There are two things you need to do as soon as possible:

1. Call us on 0345 1 24 24 24 so that we can give you help and advice. If sewage has entered your home, we'll arrange for a technician to visit the same day. You will receive a call from one of our customer managers who will let you know what's happening and the plan of action we need to take, in accordance with our Customer Charter.
2. In all instances of flooding, if your home has been damaged as a result of flooding, contact your insurance company.

We offer a service to help reduce the effects of sewage flooding – from giving practical advice to a basic clean up and, where appropriate, disinfecting the affected area.

You may also be entitled to a Customer Charter payment relating to sewer flooding. If you'd like a free copy of the Customer Charter, please contact us or visit [yorkshirewater.com/policies](https://yorkshirewater.com/policies)



## Making a claim for damage to your home

We are not liable for damage caused by flooding from a public sewer unless we've been negligent in some way, so you should notify your household insurer immediately. However, we'll look at claims on a case-by-case basis, if:

- You're not covered by your own insurance, or
- You have to pay an excess on your insurance policy, or
- Your premium increases if you make a claim on your policy for sewer flooding. (for a maximum of 2 years).

We will provide a named contact and keep you up to date with your flooding enquiry.

Your own insurance policy may give you 'new for old' cover, but we take wear and tear into account when considering claims. In some circumstances, we'll also give you a rebate of your sewerage charges. Please refer to the section on sewer flooding in our Customer Charter.

## For more information on sewage flooding

Please go to [yorkshirewater.com/flood](https://yorkshirewater.com/flood) for advice to protect your home or what to do if flooding occurs.

## Connecting your drain to your sewers

If you own a building and require a connection to the public sewer, we'll be pleased to help. You will need to complete an application form and there is a fee. Please visit [yorkshirewater.com/developers/services/sewerage-services](https://yorkshirewater.com/developers/services/sewerage-services) to request a New Connection guidance leaflet.

## Laying pipes on your land

We have powers and duties relating to laying or carrying out work on pipes on private land (Our guide for pipe laying on private land is available on request). The Water Industry Act allows, and in some cases, requires us to do these works.

If you dispute this with us you have the right to raise this with the industry regulator Ofwat. For more information visit: [yorkshirewater.com/pipelaying](https://yorkshirewater.com/pipelaying)

## Free ways to contact us:



**Chat with us live on our website**



**Free callback service via our website**

No waiting around on hold, fill out a simple form and one of our advisors will call you back as soon as possible.



**Visit our website [yorkshirewater.com](http://yorkshirewater.com)**



**Tweet us @YWHelp**



**Contact us on Facebook**

## Other ways to contact us:

Telephone

**0345 1 24 24 24**

Our contact centre is open for billing enquiries Monday to Friday 8am-8pm and Saturday 9am-5pm. For water and sewerage enquiries we're open Monday to Saturday 6.30am-10pm and Sunday 7.30am-10pm. We're open 24 hours a day for emergency calls.

24 Hour automated services

**0345 1 247 247**

(meter readings and payments)

Write to us

**PO Box 52, Bradford, BD3 7YD**

## Codes of Practice available:

- Our Customer Charter
- What if you need some extra help?
- What do we charge and why?
- Tell us what you think
- What if paying your bill is a problem?
- How do we manage your water supply?
- What happens if you've got a leak?
- Whose pipe is it?
- Where does your water go?
- Would a water meter be right for you?

Our Customer Charter details our service commitments, including the payments you're entitled to if we don't meet our promises.

**Visit [yorkshirewater.com/policies](http://yorkshirewater.com/policies) for details**