

Fact Sheet: Water mains pressure

Western Water operates and maintains extensive infrastructure in order to provide our customers with a secure and safe drinking water supply. Our aim is to provide our customers with the highest level of service, which constantly meets our customers' needs and expectations. To achieve this Western Water will meet established service standards, as outlined in our *Customer Charter*.

What is Western Water's standard water flow rate?

Western Water's *Customer Charter* stipulates a minimum flow rate from a normal residential property service of 20 litres per minute at the water meter, 95 percent of the time.

This can be easily measured at the tap next to your water meter by timing how long it takes to fill a ten-litre bucket with water. If the flow rate is meeting the minimum requirement of 20 litres per minute, the bucket should take approximately 30 seconds to fill. (*Don't forget to empty the water from the bucket on to your garden beds once you have conducted the test!*)

Why are there different water flow rates across towns?

After your drinking water supply has been filtered and disinfected at one of Western Water's water filtration plants, the water is sent to storage basins and tanks located in elevated areas near the townships. The level of elevation provides the necessary pressure required to gravity feed water downhill to homes and businesses.

Water flow rates can vary, depending on the relative height of a property to the water storage tank, and a property's distance from the tank. Properties located in high country are likely to experience lower water pressure than those properties located on lower ground. In some areas, pumping stations are used to boost pressure in order to supply water at an appropriate flow rate to service customers.

Why do we experience pressure fluctuations?

Pressure fluctuations may be experienced from time to time. These are often due to usage demand on the system or the switching on or off of a nearby pumping station.

On very hot days when there is a greater demand for water on the system, the water pressure is likely to drop. You may have experienced a similar situation in your own home, for example, when the washing machine and shower are operating at the same time.

Water pipelines, including both Western Water's mains and a property's own pipes, must be well maintained to minimise the impacts of pressure fluctuation.

Can pressure changes cause problems with internal pipes and fittings in my home?

Extreme pressure changes may cause problems with internal fittings, however most standard house pipes and fittings can tolerate the typical pressure variations that occur in the water supply system. If you are undertaking any pipe work without the assistance of a professional tradesperson, great care should be taken as poor quality pipes and fittings may not cope with fluctuations in water pressure. If you have any concerns about the plumbing or the fittings on your property, Western Water recommends that you contact a licensed plumber for advice.

What about appliances that fail due to water pressure?

Appliances that use water are designed to cope with normal levels of pressure and fluctuation. Therefore, if they fail to operate, it is most likely to be an appliance fault. Just as your electricity supply may be interrupted and be subject to 'surges', so too can the water supply stop or vary in pressure without notice. And, just as an electric oven or toaster will continue to function after power fluctuations, so should your hot water service, dishwasher or washing machine continue to operate after water pressure fluctuations or a total interruption.

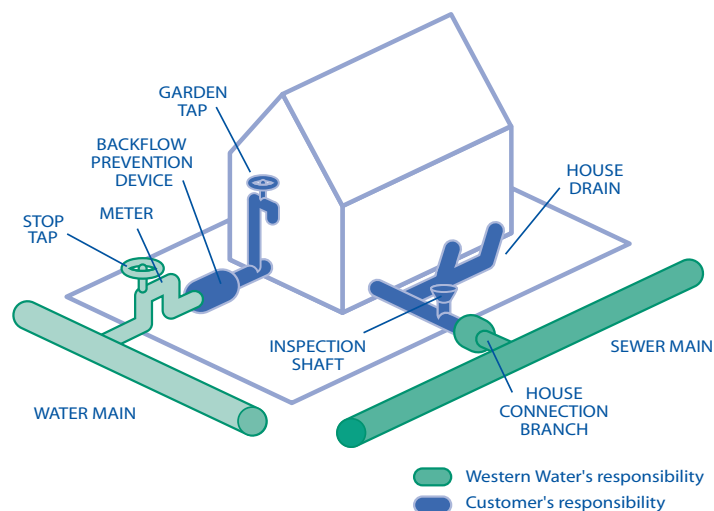
Do mains bursts affect water flow rates?

Western Water is equipped to respond quickly to water main leaks or bursts. We rely on our customers to inform us of leaks and bursts, so that we can immediately repair the main, minimise any water loss and return service to our customers. Water supply problems can be reported by calling 1300 650 425, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

When the water main is turned on following a repair, it is done gradually to avoid pressure surges. The flow rate should gradually return to the same level prior to the interruption.

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Who is responsible for maintaining leaking pipes and fittings?



Pipes, fittings and appliances can leak for several reasons including age, corrosion, poor quality, high water pressure or loose joints. You can easily check if you have any leaking pipes by reading your water meter last thing at night, and then again in the morning before any water is used. If you have not used any water during the night, the meter's reading should be exactly the same. However, if the reading has changed it may indicate that you have a leaking pipe or pipes.

Western Water is responsible for maintaining your water meter and the property service pipe, which includes the pipes and fittings from your water meter (or the first stop valve inside your property if there is no meter) to the water main. If the water service problem is in Western Water's section of the pipes, then it will be repaired at our expense.

Maintenance of all water pipes on the property side of the meter (or, if there is no meter, the stop valve) is the responsibility of the property owner. If a problem occurs in this section of the service, such as a water leak, the owner of the property is required to engage a licensed plumber to undertake repairs.

Can I alter my pressure rate?

Generally, water pressure is determined by the elevation of your property in relation to the water supply system. The pressure at your property is required to be at the level it is to ensure that the system operates adequately for all the customers on the supply system.

After tapping into the water main, it is the property owner's responsibility to control the pressure of water within their property.

If the water pressure is too high for your various fittings and appliances, a licensed plumber can be engaged to fit a Pressure Limiting Valve to your property. The cost for such a valve, and its maintenance, is the responsibility of the property owner.

If you are experiencing continual low water pressure problems, please contact Western Water on 1300 650 425.

Will high pressure cause my water meter to tick over by itself?

No. Water meters are designed to accurately measure the actual volume of water that you use, and will not be affected as a result of high or low water pressure, or water pressure fluctuations.

Some water companies have reduced flow rates to save water. Is Western Water doing this too?

Western Water has implemented several initiatives to save water, however the reduction of water pressure is not planned at this stage.

Further Information

For more information or to request a copy of Western Water's Customer Charter, please contact Western Water on 1300 650 425 or visit www.westernwater.com.au