



HOW THE CITY OF CAPE TOWN MANAGES LEAKS AND BURST PIPES GUIDE AND FAQs

Updated: 17 October 2018

1. What are the five categories of leaks that the City fixes??

The City is responsible for fixing the following types of leaks:

- 1.1. Burst pipe, also at times mistaken for an overflowing sewer
- 1.2. Broken leading
- 1.3. Leak at water meter/council stopcock
- 1.4. Leak in road/pavement/underground (City property)
- 1.5. Leak at valve or fire hydrant

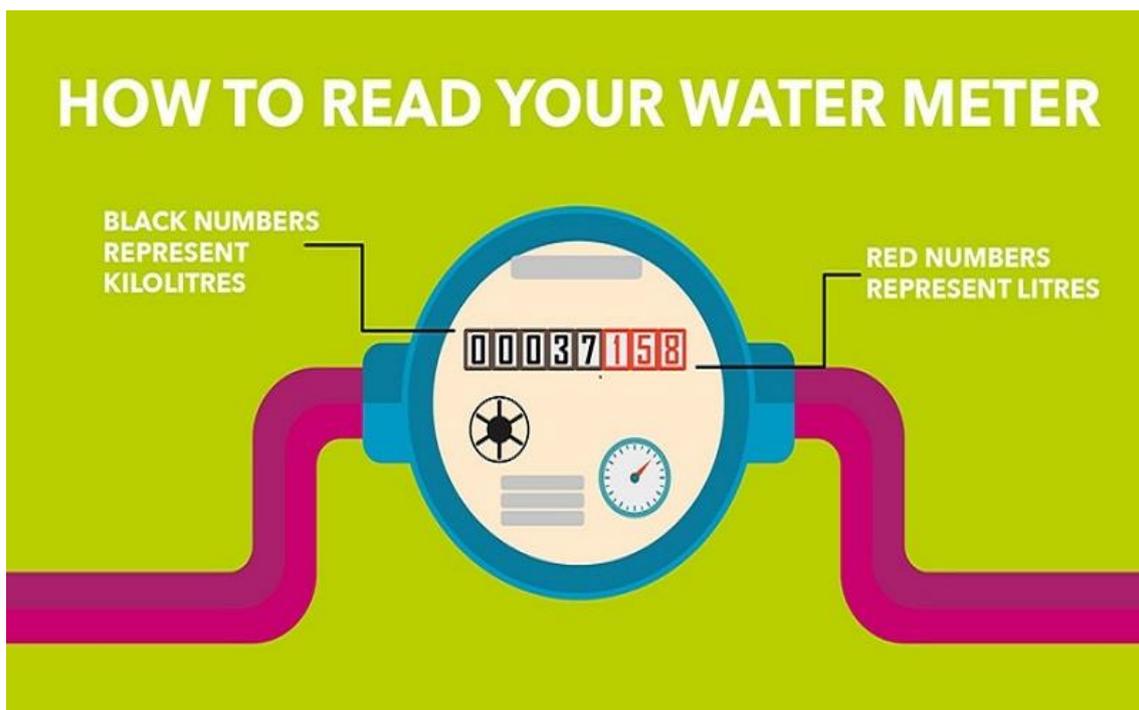
It is the responsibility of the owner to fix all **leaks on privately owned property**, whether it is indoors, on the property or underneath the property.

In some cases, the City does provide assistance. For instance, when an owner is indigent and qualifies for the [Indigent Leak Project](#).

2. How do I check for leaks on my property?

1. Close all taps on the property and don't flush the toilets
2. Check and record your meter reading
3. Wait 15 minutes and record the meter reading
4. If there is a difference in your meter reading, you have a leak
5. Call a [registered plumber](#) if it is not a DIY job

(Note: While in status of closed taps/no flush, the customer can also focus on the last digit on the right of the counter – if it continuously moves, it would be an indicator of a leak.)



LEAK REPAIR FAQS

One leaking toilet wastes between about 2 600 and 13 000 litres per month, depending on the flow rate of the leak. A leaking tap wastes between about 400 and 2 600 litres per month. This is a costly affair.

3. Is there help available for private property owners who detect a leak on their property?

For a list of registered plumbers in Cape Town, please visit:

www.capetown.gov.za/thinkwater

Note that the City is not responsible for any work done by any plumbers on this list.

For a DIY GUIDE to fixing leaks, please visit: www.capetown.gov.za/thinkwater

The City offers help to indigent consumers.

4. How are these five categories prioritised?

The effects of some leaks are worse than others. For example, a burst pipe could lose much more water than a leak at a water meter or fire hydrant. There are almost 11 000 km of water pipeline across the metro and the City must balance staffing resources, therefore, leaks are prioritised according to water loss.

Sometimes, what looks like a massive leak to a member of the public, is actually smaller in terms of actual water loss compared to another leak which the City may be busy fixing in another area.

All leaks are attended to but are prioritised based on the water losses.

In some cases, it may take longer to fix a leak. For instance, if traffic must be rerouted, private vehicles must be moved- which are parked in public spaces, there is a MyCiTi bus station involved and/or massive excavation and equipment is required to fix the infrastructure.

5. What is the average/estimated timeframes for fixing each kind of leak?

On average, the City's First Level Response teams will attend to a service request which has been formally logged on the City's system **within two hours**.

The response team will assess the leak, and sometimes, they are able to rectify the situation. Other times, a higher level response is required with specialised skills and/ or equipment or a collaborative approach between many City departments is necessary to enable the fixing of the leak.

For instance Water and Sanitation Department, Traffic Services and Fire and Rescue Services could all be required in order to fix a particular leak. If first responders need further support to rectify the problem, the water supply is turned off.

Burst pipes receive priority but repair times vary according to:

- 5.1.1. time of day, i.e. day or night
- 5.1.2. City's available personnel
- 5.1.3. number of service requests needing attention
- 5.1.4. travel time
- 5.1.5. Location (under parked private vehicles, on a busy road etc.)
- 5.1.6. environmental conditions

- 5.1.7. pipe diameter
- 5.1.8. access problem

The City is currently developing an integrated information system which will deal with response times and other matters.

6. What exactly do the first-level responders do?

- 6.1. Assess the situation
- 6.2. Report back to the depot on urgency, priority, type of leak.
- 6.3. Ensure public safety by marking/cordoning the site
- 6.4. Turn off supply if they need further support to rectify the problem
- 6.5. Turn on supply after repair if required

7. How many staff are on the road repairing water leaks and water pipe bursts at one time?

- 7.1. Varies from depot to depot
- 7.2. Varies according to time of day
- 7.3. Not all depots have First Level Responders
- 7.4. Not all depots have 24/7 First Level Responders

Work is always done according to priority, for instance, the scale and scope of the incident.

8. In cases where residents report that a service request for a leak repair was logged, but it hasn't been resolved in two to three weeks, what are the possible reasons for this?

- 8.1. Incorrect information was given/taken
- 8.2. The Service Request was not assigned to the correct depot
- 8.3. Insufficient human resources
- 8.4. Leaks were not reported through the formal business processes, in other words, logged as a service request through the City's Call Centre or through other available channels instead.

Residents must please provide an exact location or address when reporting these matters to the City. They may also contact water@capetown.gov.za.

Always ensure that you get a reference number.

9. What is the correct process to follow to ensure that service requests are attended to within the shortest space of time possible?

There are various ways to report a leak, you can phone [086 010 3089](tel:0860103089) (select option 2); or send an SMS to [31373](tel:31373), or a WhatsApp to [063 407 3699](tel:0634073699) (Standard rates apply). There are also Free Call lines located across our communities.

LEAK REPAIR FAQS

Please ensure that you provide an exact location or address when reporting these matters to the City as well as your name and contact number should it be required to fix the leak in the shortest possible timeframe.

You may also contact water@capetown.gov.za.

Always insist on a reference number.

10. How much water does the City lose?

The City's Water Conservation and Demand Management Plan has achieved impressive results in this regard. It was internationally recognised at the [2015 C40 Cities Awards in Paris](#) as being the best in the world in terms of how it prepares the City for the challenges of climate change (including reduced rainfall).

The programme has managed to reduce the burst rate from 63,9 bursts per 100 km of piping in the 2010/2011 financial year, to 31 bursts per 100 km according to the latest statistics, saving millions of litres of water in the process. It must be noted that we have about 11 000 km of water pipeline and 9 200 km of sewer pipeline to manage so it is a huge task.

Reflecting on this success, water losses (which includes losses through leaks and bursts as well as water 'lost' through meter tampering, general metering inaccuracies, and administrative errors) for the overall systems have been reduced from around 25% in 2009 to approximately 16% according to the latest data. This is approximately half of the national average of 36%.

However, the City is committed to reducing this figure substantially over the medium-term.

11. There are six million risk points as it pertains to potential water losses. What does this mean?

There are approximately six million risk points excluding major items like reservoirs, pump stations; controlling and measuring equipment.

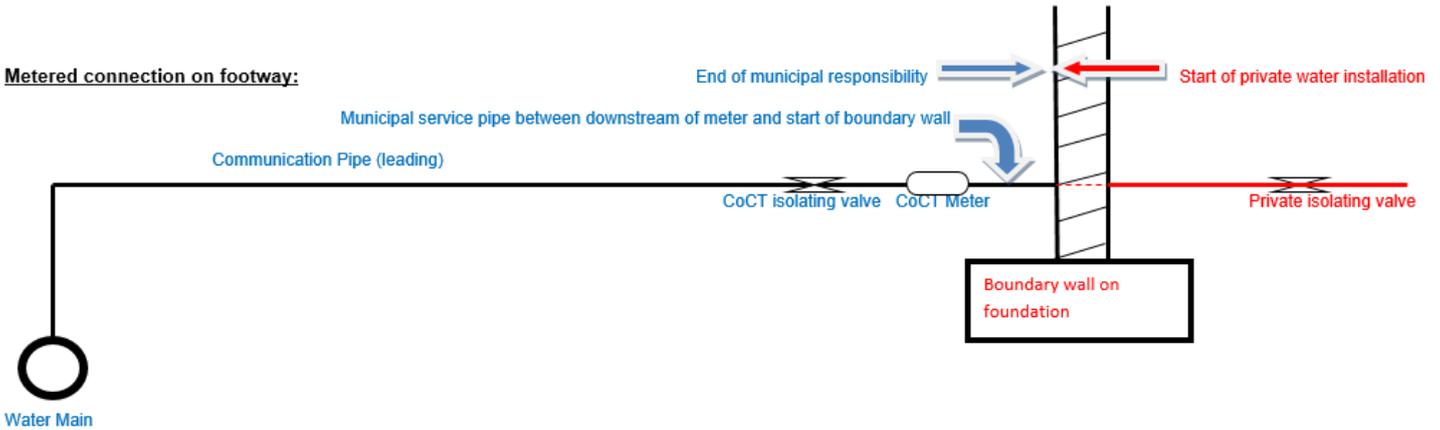
- 11.1.1. Connections
- 11.1.2. Joints
- 11.1.3. Bends
- 11.1.4. Flow meters
- 11.1.5. Valves

12. In terms of leaks on water meters, what is the standard operating procedure? When does the City fix the leak and when is it left to the owner?

This diagram shows our approach to leaks. The red area indicates where it is the responsibility of the private property owner to fix the leak.

Typical water approach, connection and "responsibility"

1. Metered connection on footway:



13. Apart from burst pipes, what are the possible reasons for water supply disruptions?

- 13.1. Planned maintenance
- 13.2. Low flows may be attributed to pressure management
- 13.3. Flow restrictor on Water Management Device
- 13.4. Disconnection of supply to a business/ commercial property due to account arrears.
- 13.5. Trickle flow to a residential property/ household due to account arrears.