



Commission for Energy Regulation

An Coimisiún um Rialáil Fuinnimh

Guide to the CER's Decision on Irish Water's Water Charges Plan for Domestic Customers

This note is a guide for domestic customers on the CER's decision on the Water Charges Plan which was amended as a result of the Water Services Act 2014 (the Act). For detailed information on the revised Water Charges Plan, please see www.cer.ie.

Main Features of the Water Charges Plan Decision as revised by the Water Services Act 2014

1. Introduction of Charges – all domestic customers are subject to charges for their water from 1st January 2015

Domestic customers are subject to charges for water from 1st January 2015. Customers should receive their first bill in April 2015 for usage in arrears (i.e. for the first three months of 2015). Flexible payment options will be offered to ease budgeting.

2. Water & Wastewater – water in equals water out

Customers may receive two water services from Irish Water – water supplied to your home and wastewater taken away. Some people use only one water service, others have both. For example, some people have a septic tank and will pay for water, not wastewater services. Water and wastewater charges will be shown separately on your bill. So if you only take one service from Irish Water you can see clearly how much you have been charged for that service. If you take both services, the amount of wastewater you produce is set equal to the amount of water that is supplied to you.

3. Capped Charges – all customers' charges will be capped until 31st December 2018

Under the Act, a maximum annual charge of €160 for water and wastewater services will apply to a dwelling occupied by one adult until 31st December 2018. Where two or more adults live in a dwelling, €260 is the maximum annual charge that will apply to a dwelling until 31st December 2018. The above applies to both metered and unmetered dwellings. This is reflected in the Water Charges Plan for the period to which the current Water Charges Plan applies, namely 1st January 2015 to 31st December 2016.

This means that if you have a meter installed, you will be billed on your metered consumption if it is less than the relevant maximum charge, but the most you will pay is €160 or €260 depending on your living arrangements. Regardless of when you have a meter installed, charges will be capped at the maximum annual charge as above.

4. Unmetered Charges – If you do not have a meter your charges will be fixed at either €160 or €260 per annum depending on your living arrangements

Irish Water is currently installing water meters at the majority of Irish homes, and approximately 80% of homes are expected to have a meter by the end of 2016. If you do not have a meter yet you will be on a fixed charge based on adult occupants only, as children are free.

An annual charge of €160 for water and wastewater services will apply to a dwelling occupied by one adult. Where two or more adults live in a dwelling, €260 is the annual charge for water and wastewater services.

Customers should notify Irish Water if there is a change in the number of occupants in the dwelling. The unmetered charges are shown in the table below.

Number of Adult Occupants	Annual Unmetered Charge	
	Single Service (Water or Wastewater)	Combined Service (Water and Wastewater)
1	€80	€160
2 or More	€130	€260

5. Metered Charges – €3.70 per thousand litres if you receive both water and wastewater services

Once your water meter is installed, you will move to metered charges and you will be charged for the amount of water you consume measured at the meter, just like electricity or gas charges. There will be no standing charge for water, just a unit rate for the litres you use.

If you have a meter installed you will pay €3.70 per 1,000 litres for water and wastewater services. However, you will not pay any more than the unmetered charges of €160 per annum for one adult or €260 per annum for two or more adults in line with the maximum charges set out in the Act.

The cost per 1,000 litres is shown for each service in the table below.

Water Service	€ per thousand litres
Water Supply	€1.85
Wastewater Service	€1.85
Combined Service	€3.70

METERED CHARGES

6. Rebates – customers will be entitled to a rebate if the meter shows that they use less than the unmetered charge.

When you get your water meter your water charges will be capped at the relevant unmetered level. Your metered bills will show how much you actually use and if your bill should have been less than your unmetered charge, you will be entitled to a rebate. If you use more, there will be no additional charge.

The rebate will be calculated after one full year of metered usage. It will be paid as a once-off credit to your account of the difference between the unmetered charge you paid (which could span more than one year) and the amount which you would have paid if you had been metered. Rebates will commence from April 2016. Rebates will not apply where a customer has outstanding charges relating to the period that they were subject to unmetered charges and has not entered into or is not complying with the terms of a payment plan.

7. PPS Numbers – Irish Water will not ask for these

You do not need to provide Irish Water with PPS numbers when registering with Irish Water and any PPS data already collected during the customer registration process will be deleted to protect customers' data.

8. Household Allowances

Under the Water Services Act 2014, there will be no household 30,000 litre allowance for water or wastewater.

9. Children are free – *all households with children aged 17 and under will receive annual allowances to cover the normal consumption of each child.*

It is Government policy that water charges should only apply to the adults living in a household and that children are free. The Government will pay for the normal consumption of every child aged 17 and under. The normal consumption of a child is currently estimated to be 21,000 litres per annum. The CER will monitor consumption patterns to ensure that this allowance continues to represent the normal consumption of a child and adjust the allowances if required.

Irish Water will facilitate the transfer of a child's allowance if the child's primary residence changes – this will require the approval of the registered occupier. Please note that the child allowance now applies to all children under the age of 18 and not just those under the age of 18 who are in receipt of child benefit, as had been previously announced by Government. This is the only type of allowance for water and wastewater available under the revised Water Charges Plan.

10. Essential Medical Use Customers

As all customers' bills will be capped based on adult occupancy, the requirement to cap bills if you have a medical condition no longer exists. If you need to use large amounts of water on account of a medical condition you will pay no more than €160 per year if you live in a single-adult dwelling or €260 if there are two or more adults in the dwelling, the same as all other primary dwellings.

However, if you need priority or special services you need to ensure you register for these services through the validation process. Please see point 14 for details on how to register.

11. Water Quality – *where water is unfit for human consumption, affected customers will receive a 100% discount on the costs of their water supply for the duration of the restriction.*

The CER has decided to **apply a 100% discount on the element of the bill relating to the supply of water where water is unfit for human consumption.** If you are living in an area where there is a Boil Water Notice (BWN) or a Drinking Water Restriction Notice (DWRN), so that your water is not fit for human consumption, you will receive a 100% discount on the cost of your water supply for the duration of the disruption. In other words, there will be no water supply charge in these cases. The discount will relate to the 'water in' service only, so, in effect, if you receive two services you will receive a reduction in charges of 50%. The discount will be applied automatically to the bill 24 hours after the notice is issued. If you take wastewater services, wastewater charges will continue to apply.

12. Additional Services

The only additional services which Irish Water can charge for are those relating to special meter reads or tests and domestic connections.

The charge for a special domestic meter read is €17. This applies where a domestic customer requests that a meter read be undertaken outside of the normal meter reading schedule.

The charge for domestic meter testing is €100. This applies where a domestic customer believes that their water meter is not registering accurately and Irish Water arrange for it to be tested. If the meter is within the accepted tolerances, the meter testing charge will apply. If the meter is not accurate to within such tolerances, the domestic customer will not be charged.

The CER will be consulting on domestic connections in due course.

13. Non-Primary Residences – a minimum combined charge of €125 will apply to non-primary residences

Properties that are not permanently occupied as a primary residence will incur an annual minimum charge of €125, or €62.50 per service, to reflect the fact that there are costs for providing water services to these properties even if they are not permanently occupied. The minimum charge will apply regardless of whether the property is metered or unmetered. If the dwelling is not permanently occupied, the owner will need to register it as so. If it is not registered as unoccupied, it will attract a default charge of €260 per year. Dwellings with meters installed will pay €3.70 per 1,000 litres for usage of both services above the equivalent usage for the minimum charge up to a maximum of €260.

14. Validation Campaign – all customers are required to complete a validation form to establish your household details

If you use water or wastewater services and have not already registered with Irish Water, you should do so now. You can do this by phone or by completing and returning a validation pack which was sent to you by Irish Water. The form is also available for online completion at www.water.ie.

If a customer fails to register, they will be exposed to a default tariff. This charge will be set at the equivalent unmetered charge for a two-person household with no allowances, i.e. €260. It will be billed quarterly, at €65 each quarter.

Domestic customers who contact Irish Water to register their details in 2015 will have updated occupancy changes and any relevant allowances backdated to the 1st January 2015.

Domestic customers who contact Irish Water to register their details during 2016 will have updated occupancy changes and any relevant allowances backdated for the current Billing Period and one prior Billing Period.

15. Customer Codes of Practice – the CER has required Irish Water to publish its Codes of Practice and Terms & Conditions in line with the CER-approved Customer Handbook which contains the minimum standards of service that customers can expect from Irish Water

The CER has reviewed and approved Irish Water's Codes of Practice, Customer Charter and Terms & Conditions of supply for water and wastewater services for domestic customers. The domestic Codes of Practice cover Irish Water's customer service requirements in respect of Communications, Metering, Billing, Vulnerable Customers, Network Operations and Complaint Handling. The CER has also reviewed and approved Irish Water's Codes of Practice for business customers. All of these documents came into force on 1st October 2014 and are currently being reviewed as a result of the new legislation. The revised documents will be available on Irish Water's website (www.water.ie).

Note:**Water Conservation Grant**

A water conservation grant will be made available for dwellings after registration for water charges, as provided for by the Water Services Act 2014. However, this is not within the CER's remit and is therefore not addressed in the Water Charges Plan.

Further Queries

If you have any further queries in relation to the CER's decision on the Water Charges Plan please contact waterchargesplan2015@cer.ie .

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