

1. Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide customers with transparency on what defines an undetected leak, how an undetected leak application (UDL) is reviewed and processed where leaks are deemed to be eligible for a leak rebate.

2. Scope

This procedure covers the following steps:

- Definitions
- Eligibility criteria
- Exclusions
- Obligations of customers
- Obligations of Coliban Water
- Minimum guideline for calculating leaks and unexplained high consumption allowance.

3. Definitions

- **Customer**

A customer can be an owner/tenant or occupier

- **Residential and non-residential customers**

Own and occupy a serviced property connected to the water corporation's water or wastewater systems.

Must be a customer of an urban water corporation.

Own a serviced property connected to the water corporation's water and wastewater systems, but do not occupy it – for example, a landlord or an owner of an unoccupied property.

Occupy a serviced property which is connected to the water corporation's water or wastewater system and are liable to pay water usage or wastewater volumetric charges – for example a tenant.

- **Leak**

A hole or other opening caused by age or damage through which water is lost.

- **Detected leak**

A leak which is visible under normal inspection conditions and procedures.

- **Undetected leak**

- A leak which is not visible under normal inspection conditions which requires special assistance to locate.

- An undetected leak is usually a burst pipe either underground, under concrete or underneath a building where no visible sign of water loss could have been reasonably detected (e.g. dampness or excessive growth in the vicinity or on the surface above the ground) by the customer prior to the water corporation issuing an account.

- The definition also includes customers who have a disability that would prevent them from detecting the leak.

- **High consumption**

High consumption is considered to be a larger than normal amount of water usage measured in kilolitres (as opposed to an increased dollar amount) that is not a leak but still constitutes a significant increase when compared to the customer's normal usage for the same time over previous years. It may be explainable by the customer after referring to the Energy and Water Ombudsman (EWOV) High Bill Investigation Procedure (February 2009).

- **A one off unexplained high consumption event**

Refers to a situation where a customer genuinely cannot account for a limited period of high usage over a single quarter after working through the EWOV High Bill Investigation Procedure and ruling out all of the reasons highlighted. Unexplained usage is often attributed to either water theft or a one off event that the account holder has not been made aware of.

- **URG – Utility Relief Grant**

A financial concession for a utility account available through the Department of Human Services for customers experiencing hardship. Generally only granted once every two years.

- **Water supply**

Is defined as any part of a hot or cold water service that is connected to a drinking water supply, from the point of connection to the water supply to the points of discharge of the service. Water supply also includes any part of a non-drinking hot or cold water service or rainwater service, from the point of connection to the water supply to the points of discharge of the service.

4. Eligibility criteria

- Residential customers and non-residential customers.
- Not for profit organisations – schools, hospitals, nursing homes, churches, charitable, outdoor sporting and recreational groups.
- Rural properties connected to a drinking water supply.

5. Exclusions

- Customers with a detectable leak – excluded from any reduction on their account as it is the customer's responsibility to regularly inspect their property, maintain their internal plumbing and take immediate action when a leak is detected. Notwithstanding, water corporations will take into consideration any special needs of a customer that may impede their ability to detect leaks. .
- Water by Agreement customers – excluded as the agreements are so varied across the industry and may not be fronted by a main.
- Large volume customers that are covered under waterMAPs – excluded as these customers are required to closely monitor their usage as required by waterMAPs.
- Irrigation customers – where entitlements are secured by a water share issued under *Division 2 of Part 3A of the Act* or by a take and use licence issued in accordance with *Sections 51, 53, 56, 58 and 62 of the Act*.
- Leaks and / or bursts on appliances, fixtures or fittings, including air conditioners, dish washers, swimming pools, hot water systems, solar systems, toilet cisterns, valves, sprinkler systems and rainwater tanks.
- Leaks on or due to internal or external taps

- Situations where the leak is visible
- Situations where the internal plumbing is open ended. (i.e. not connected to anything.)
- Plumbing that is not compliant with government regulations.
- Vacant or unattended premises.
- Customers who have already received an amended account under Coliban Water's undetected leak policy within the last five years will be ineligible.

6. Obligations of customers

All reasonable effort must be taken by the owner to ensure that the property's water infrastructure is maintained in good working order. This will include the following:

- Conducting overnight meter tests, by recording start and finish meter reads.
- Turning off all water systems and filling a 10 litre bucket, taking a reading of the meter prior to and following filling the bucket.
- Checking toilets by placing a square of toilet paper in the bowl toward the back of the pan directly under the lip of the bowl to detect if there is any flow of water.
- Checking taps and outlets for visible leaks.
- Checking the hot water service for visible leaks.
- Checking the garden for obvious damp areas and green patches.
- Completing a usage diary for all temporary occupants of the property.

Tenants have an obligation to report a suspected leak to the property owner or managing agent.

The repair of leaks on a water supply must be undertaken by a plumber that is licensed or registered with the Plumbing Industry Commission. Customers must provide a plumbing report to help substantiate the claim and to ensure that the works undertaken meet current plumbing standards.

Alternatively, a customer may provide a statutory declaration outlining the repairs undertaken and the repair work must be inspected by a Coliban Water representative prior to covering over.

A leak must be repaired within two weeks of the customer becoming aware of a possible leak unless extenuating circumstances apply.

Customers are required to make application within four weeks from the due date of the billing period. All applications must be submitted using the Undetected Leak Application form [UDL Application form](#), unless exceptional circumstances apply.

A meter read taken at completion of repairs must be supplied as part of the application process.

Customers are required to co-operate with Coliban Water officers and provide information requested or to participate in investigations in order to assist in resolving the claim.

If no leak is found customers are liable for all water that has been registered through the meter and costs of all water supplied to the property, as per *Section 273A of the Water Act 1989*.

7. Obligations of Coliban Water

Coliban Water is to assist with high consumption enquiries by educating customers as to the following processes:

- Detecting leaks (i.e. 2 hour test, overnight test, etc.)
- Reading meters for testing purposes
- Utility Relief Grants or concessions they may be eligible and payment arrangement options.

As part of the investigation, Coliban Water will make the customer aware of their obligations under our policy on undetected leaks.

All applications will be assessed within 10 business days from the date that evidence is provided.

Provided the customer has met all their obligations the investigating officer may approve the application and will calculate an adjustment as per the guidelines, and communicate the adjustment to the customer.

The allowance will be calculated on 50% of the increase of excess water usage, (based on average historical consumption for the same period in previous years) and capped at \$1,000. For non-residential customers, the allowance will also be calculated on 100% of the increase of excess sewerage volume charge.

For customers who do not have historical consumption available, calculations can be made on the readings and consumption volumes recorded in the billing quarter before the leak occurred, or in the period after the leak has been repaired.

The water leak must be repaired by a licensed or registered plumber or a statutory declaration must be provided and the repair work may be inspected by a Coliban Water representative prior to covering over the section of pipe that has been dug up.

Communicate the adjustment to the customer. Include information on eligibility on future high consumption requests as per water corporation policy (one every five years per property, per customer). All customers should be notified about their obligations.

If a property leak has not been repaired following consultation with Coliban Water, we may issue a notice to repair the leak pursuant to *Section 150 Notice to Repair and Section 151 Notice of Contravention of the Water Act (1989)*. No adjustment will be considered until the leak is repaired.

Process adjustment in accordance with the recommended minimum guidelines set out below.

Coliban Water should notify the customer of the high usage either prior to, or at the time of, issuing the account to ensure that the customer is aware of the issue as soon as practicable.

8. Minimum guideline for calculating leaks and unexplained high usage allowance

Customers are only able to receive one allowance every five years, per property. Note: where there is both a leak and unexplained high usage within the five years per customer per property, it is up to Coliban Water's discretion to grant more than one allowance.

Adjustments are calculated using a Consumption Review Calculator. Adjustment provided is 50% of estimated water lost and 100% of the Sewerage Volume Charge where applicable. The maximum allowance is capped at \$1,000 per claim for estimated water lost. For non-residential customers, the allowance will also be calculated on 100% of the increase of excess sewage volume charge. Coliban Water may exercise discretion to increase this allowance on a case by case basis.

The Sewerage Volume Charge is calculated by multiplying the revised average consumption for the billing quarter, (from above) by the discharge factor and per kilolitre rate. The rebate is based on the difference between charges billed to the customer and the amended Sewerage Volume Charge based on the revised average.