

external flooding

We are very sorry that you have suffered waste water flooding.

Flooding is an issue of increasing concern to our customers. Scottish Water has a role to play in dealing with flooding, along with other public bodies. The responsibilities surrounding flooding are complex, and at present a number of agencies have responsibility for dealing with different aspects of flooding in Scotland.

This factsheet provides you with information on:

- what causes waste water flooding
- what health risks are there
- what are Scottish Water doing
- what can you do to help reduce the likelihood of future flooding at your property
- what can Scottish Water do to help you
- how to contact us

what causes waste water flooding

Flooding is usually caused by prolonged or heavy rainfall, typically in the form of severe localised storms that can overwhelm the drainage system. Other common factors which can lead to blockages that can cause flooding are:

- Defective pipe work – the pipe may be broken or joints displaced and these catch debris and paper.
- Roots – roots from bushes and trees are attracted to the water and work their way through the joints in the pipe. As the roots grow they catch toilet paper etc and restrict the flow through the pipe which may cause the pipe to choke and eventually cause flooding.
- Paper and cloth products – disposable nappies, rags, wipes, sanitary towels and cotton buds can easily become stuck in drains and sewers. Over time this can form a solid mass and eventually stop the flow of water.
- Fat, oils and grease – if poured down sinks these will build up over time and harden on to the walls of pipes and drains and completely block sewers. These blockages are often hard to remove.
- Silt – silt or gravel in the pipe may be entering the system at an open point and accumulating in the pipe causing blockages.



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what health risks are there

The following advice is based on guidelines provided by the Water Research Centre (WRc.)

Most bacteria from waste water on gardens, lawns, tarmac and other paved areas will be harmless within days – through the action of the sunlight. For example, in WRc research on turf and clay, amounts fell to normal background levels within 6 days during the summer, rising to 18 days in the winter.

A disinfectant can be used on tarmac and paved areas to speed up the process but waste water on soil or grassed areas is best left to decay naturally. On outdoor areas any excess water should be removed and the area should not be used for recreational purposes within the number of days shown on the table below. It is not advisable to 'dig in' any waste debris as this will slow down the action of the sunlight.

Minimum number of days to keep off flooded outdoor areas.

Season	Turf/Clay	Soil Sand
Spring	13	20
Summer	6	9
Autumn	13	20
Winter	18	11

what are Scottish Water doing

It is necessary to ensure that when looking at a solution to any flooding problem it does not create a problem elsewhere. Solutions could include sewer cleaning in areas known to flood to reduce the risk and remove blockages or correct any minor defects that may have occurred.

how to contact us

Details of how to dispose of cooking fats and our bag it and bin it campaigns can be found on our website or by contacting us on the details below.

If you require more information on our services, please contact us:

By phone on our Customer Helpline **0845 601 8855**

On the web at **www.scottishwater.co.uk**

Or in writing at **Scottish Water, PO Box 8855, Edinburgh, EH10 6YQ**

what can you do to help reduce the likelihood of future flooding at your property

- Avoid planting trees over sewers and drains as the roots could cause damage.
- Do not dispose of fat or grease down your sink or drains as this could build up over time and cause blockages. We encourage you to put any used fats and oils into a sealable container and dispose of it with your household rubbish – bag it and bin it.
- Do not dispose of non-degradable products down your toilets (these include baby wipes, nappies, razor blades and cotton buds). Always make sure you bag and bin any paper and cloth products.

It is always important that we are notified of each time that you are aware of external flooding to ensure that our information is both accurate and up to date when we are planning a solution to the problem.

what can Scottish Water do to help you

In the event of flooding from our sewers, we will do all we can to reduce the impact on any customer affected and will work hand in hand with the local Council, emergency services, the Scottish Government and SEPA. Our Code of Practice provides further information about this support and our guaranteed standards of service for any customers affected.

When external flooding occurs we will:

- attend the flooding and clear any blockages
- clean up the area
- carry out onsite investigations to identify likely causes or need for further investigations
- we will keep you updated on findings during these onsite investigations

Alternative formats of this leaflet can be made available free of charge. For information on Braille, large print, audio and a variety of languages, please call our Customer Helpline.

Please quote this reference code when contacting us: **SWFact EF3 04/11**

We record all calls for quality and training purposes.