



Dŵr Cymru
Welsh Water

FloodCare

What you should do,
and how we can help
when you're flooded





Flooding is distressing, and sewer flooding is particularly unpleasant.

It can happen for a variety of reasons and although we are doing everything we can to reduce the risk of it happening, we can't always stop it.

This booklet gives you a clear, step-by-step guide about:

- what you should do if you experience flooding
- what we can do to help
- causes of sewer flooding and who, if anyone, is responsible for putting it right
- what can be done to reduce the risk of it happening again.



What to do if you've been flooded

1. Contact the right people:

Call us (day or night) on 0800 085 3968 if the flooding is caused by our sewers. **Sewer flooding is sewage escaping from a drain, pipe, toilet or through a manhole.** We will come out to investigate the cause of the flooding and see if anything can be done to stop it happening again.

- **Contact your Insurance company straight away** to tell them about the flooding and any damage caused. They will be able to help you with arranging the clean up and drying of your property, finding alternative accommodation if needed, and give you advice and support on making a claim for damages or losses. It's best to contact them immediately, as not telling them about the issue may affect any claims you make.

- Flooding is occasionally caused by surface water from the highway. This is the responsibility of the Highway Authority (usually your local council). They are responsible for maintaining road gullies and highway drains. If you think the flooding is caused by water from the road, contact your local county council.

- Flooding from streams, rivers, land or the sea - Natural Resources Wales

(Environment Agency in England) is responsible for most river flood defences. Sometimes high river levels can cause other drainage systems – including sewers – to back up and cause flooding. If you think the flooding is caused by streams, rivers, land or sea, call Floodline on 0845 988 1188.

2. Keep a record

- Taking photos of the flooded area can be helpful in working out why the flooding happened and support any insurance claims you make. If it's safe to do so, take photos or film the area and show it to us and your insurance company.

3. Keep safe

- If it's safe to do so, turn off the electricity at the fuse box. If your electricity meter, fuse box or any electrical appliance or socket has been submerged, contact your electricity supplier for advice before using any electrical equipment.
- If your gas meter or any gas appliance has been submerged, contact your gas supplier for advice before switching on the gas or lighting any appliance.
- Keep your home (and any outbuildings) well ventilated.

- If you're worried about any health risks, call your local authority's environmental health team.

4. Protect your health

- Sewer flooding largely consists of water and waste from bathrooms and kitchens. During wet weather it's likely to be highly diluted by rainwater.
- If you take normal basic hygiene precautions, you're unlikely to be at any increased health risk if sewage flooding enters your property.
- You should:
 - Wear rubber gloves when exposed to flood water
 - Look out for glass, nails and other sharp objects
 - Always wash your hands after exposure
 - Wash and treat footwear with mild disinfectant
 - Keep children and pets out of the contaminated area.
- In the unlikely event that you start to feel unwell, visit your GP and explain that your property has recently been flooded.



What we can do?

We'll always respond to sewage flooding incidents, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. We aim to get to you as soon as possible, day or night. Sometimes, especially during severe weather, we may take a little longer, but we'll keep you informed of our likely time of arrival.

Dealing with the problem and cleaning up:

Internal Flooding

Your insurance company will make arrangements to remove carpets, furniture and other damaged items. We strongly advise all customers have appropriate insurance to make sure you have a policy that provides you with cover for sewer flooding.

If you decide to dispose of any damaged items yourself, make sure you check with your Insurance company first as they may need to see the damaged items first hand.

External Flooding

Unless your insurance company has made other arrangements, once the cause of the flooding has been stopped, we'll clear all sewage debris from affected areas. We'll take away all waste material and, with your agreement, we'll treat any flooded areas with disinfectant.

You will need to restrict the use of the affected areas until this work is done and, with your agreement, we will cordon off the area. Water industry guidelines advise that the garden will be safe after a clean-up and quarantine period, as follows:

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



What happens next?

We investigate every case of sewer flooding. A member of the Welsh Water team will meet you and we'll do all we can to understand why the flooding happened. You'll then be given a customer service contact, who will remain your point of contact with us throughout the investigation process.

We'll carry out a full investigation, including a CCTV survey of the sewer, to help establish the cause of the flooding. We'll contact you within ten working days of the flooding to update you on our progress, and to let you know what the next steps will be.

In some cases further investigation may be required. This could be complex and may take a little time – so please bear with us.

If the flood has been caused by the public sewerage system, we'll try and resolve it. If it hasn't, we'll let you know what we can do to help. The flooding may not be our responsibility, and other organisations, such as the local authority, may need to be involved. If we find that the cause of the flooding is someone else's responsibility, we will contact them directly explaining what we've found and asking them to take action as soon as possible. If a larger scale project is required to fix the problem, we'll keep you updated.



In an emergency we will attend
24 hours a day, 7 days a week,
365 days a year.



Causes of sewer flooding and who, if anyone, is responsible for putting it right

At Welsh Water, we work hard to make sure our sewer network is in good working order. There are times when sewer flooding is caused by things that are beyond our control and we will be unable to accept liability:

- If the flooding is a result of a blockage in the pipes – these happen when people flush items down the toilet or drain when they should go in the bin. This includes wipes, sanitary products and fat, oils and grease from cooking.
- When the sewerage system is unable to cope with the amount of wastewater and rainwater passing through it, usually caused by exceptional weather including intense or prolonged periods of rainfall - this is called hydraulic overload.
- The flood is from privately owned sewerage pipes (i.e. the part of the sewer or drains that you're responsible for).
- You have somehow caused the flood (for example, if you have in some way damaged our sewerage pipe).

However, if you are flooded by one of our sewers, you will be entitled to a payment through our Guaranteed Standards of Service (GSS), in line with industry regulations. More details about these payments can be found below.

GSS payment values

- **GSS - Internal sewage flooding:** If you have suffered internal sewage flooding from our sewers (when sewage enters a building or your home or integral garage), we'll give you a payment equivalent to your annual sewerage bill (a minimum of £150 and a maximum of £1000 per incident) within 20 working days.
- **GSS - Serious external sewage flooding:** If sewage enters your land or property preventing you from accessing your home; causes your garden to be extensively flooded, effectively leading to its destruction; or your outbuildings/ non-integral garages being flooded from our sewers, we'll give you a payment equivalent to half of your annual sewerage bill (a minimum of £75 and a maximum of £500 per incident) within 20 working days.

Any GSS payment you receive is separate from, and in addition to, any other claims you make to your insurance provider. GSS payment does not constitute an admission of liability on our part.

Remember - your insurer should pay out, regardless of who's to blame. But if someone (including us!) is to blame, then your insurer will handle the claim on your behalf.

Who is responsible for sewer blockages





How you can help

Unfortunately, some areas are affected by repeat flooding problems, and we're currently investing a lot of money and effort to reduce the risk of this type of flooding. It's very important that you tell us each time you are flooded so that we can help you – and keep an accurate record of who has been affected so that we can improve the network in the future.

However, a large number of flooding incidents are caused by the unsuitable items being flushed down the toilet, sinks or drains. Remember

All facial, baby, cleaning and wet wipes (even those labelled flushable can cause blockages), sanitary products, nappies and cotton buds must be thrown in the bin. These items are the main causes of blockages.

Fats, kitchen oil, and grease (known as FOG) and **food waste** also cause major blockages. Wipe out your pans and other greasy items with a kitchen towel before washing them. Throw the kitchen towel in the bin and pour any used cooking oil into a container to dispose of or recycle it.

Do not jet-wash/brush items such as **mud, grass, animal waste** and other **garden debris** into an open manhole. These should be disposed of via garden waste bins/refuse bags.



Think Ahead

If you know you're at risk of flooding, you can make sure you're prepared:

- Keep a supply of sandbags ready to prevent flood water entering your property
- Ensure you know how to turn off your gas and electricity supplies
- Put together a flood kit including a torch, blankets, wellingtons, waterproofs, gloves - and vital contact details
- Store irreplaceable items above ground level, or upstairs.



Emergency Contact Details

The first thing to do in any flooding incident is to contact the right people



Welsh Water

Sewerage Services and Emergencies

0800 085 3968

Contact us if you're suffering from flooding as a result of sewage escaping from a drain, pipe, toilet or through a manhole

Water Services and Emergencies

0800 052 0130

Other useful numbers:

Floodline

0845 988 1188

Call this number if you are experiencing a river or coastal flood.

My household content insurers:

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My household buildings insurers:

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My electricity supplier:

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My gas supplier:

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My plumber:

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If you are in danger or people have been injured, please call 999 immediately.