

Customers

Every day we supply some 600 million litres of water to almost one million households, as well as to industry and commerce within our supply area. This includes water for fire fighting supplied at no charge. We also manage the increase in demand, which at its peak can rise as high as a total of 850 million litres a day, generated by a seasonal influx of holidaymakers.

Background

- 1,217,017 telephone calls were taken by our Customer Service Centre throughout 2003-2004
- We answered 95.3% of 2003-2004 calls within 30 seconds
- We dealt with 92.5% of billing contacts within five days
- We dealt with 100% of any written complaints within 10 days
- There were no customer restrictions on 2003-2004 water use
- There were 195 unplanned interruptions to customer water supply exceeding 12 hours in 2003-2004
- 537 customers were at risk of low supply pressure at year-end for 2003-2004
- Flooding incidents due to overloaded sewers have reduced again this year to 28
- We made 654 penalty payments to customers totalling £72,228 in 2003-2004

We aim to provide a high level of customer service at all times

We return around 800 million litres of treated wastewater to the environment every day.

This is a combination of rainfall, water used in factories and domestic wastewater from nearly two million households from toilets, baths, kitchen sinks, washing machines, dishwashers and so on.

Our water efficiency plan recognises that, to promote water efficiency effectively, we must set a good example. To this end we continue to achieve our leakage targets and have an ongoing programme to reduce our own water usage. Customer participation and feedback is crucial to the success of our water efficiency programme and we see our campaign as a partnership between our customers and us.

For more information

See the **Water and Community sections of this report at** www.southernwater.co.uk/sustainability

Our customers can help us by using water wisely and disposing of wastes and chemicals safely.

Summer and autumn 2003 were some of the driest recorded for more than 100 years causing drought conditions across the South of England. As part of our demand management strategy we contacted some of our higher water users to highlight the situation. We proposed how we could work together to minimise wastage and reduce water consumption, helping save them money in the process. Key commercial customers in areas particularly affected by the dry conditions were contacted with information on water audits and efficiency. This included details of the Government's Enhanced Capital Allowance scheme providing 100% tax relief for businesses investing in specific water efficiency products. We also offered to conduct free water audits of these businesses to provide free on-site advice for improving water use.

Over 55,000 unmetered customers were sent letters across north Sussex and Hastings (areas of high water demand) in 2003-2004. We designed the letters to create awareness of the water demand / water resource imbalance. 5,474 customers in those areas switched to meters over the last year. Altogether in north Sussex and Hastings this represented a 62% increase on meters compared with 2002-2003. This was a significant increase, but considering the switch was made by just under 10% of customers mailed, there are many more homes that could benefit. Our local case study of water use by a family of three in our Hastings supply area showed customers how they could reduce water consumption and save up to £99 a year with measured charges on their water bill.

For more information

See the **Water and Community sections of this report at** www.southernwater.co.uk/sustainability or our **WaterWise pages at** www.southernwater.co.uk

At the height of the hot summer we increased the profile of our water efficiency message by sending 40,000 letters to customers in the Hastings area. We asked them to adopt simple water saving measures. This was supported by a vigorous press and radio campaign. In November 2003, we undertook a water efficiency awareness campaign through partnerships with local stores in Hastings.



LINKS: Customer Service Centre: Service enquiries (open 24 hours for emergencies) 0845 278 0845; Account enquiries (open Mon-Fri 8am-6pm, Sat 8am-1pm) 0845 272 0845; Minicom users 0845 275 0845; Household metering service centre 0845 270 0845; Additional needs assistance 0800 027 0800 www.southernwater.co.uk

Domestic Customers

The Office of Water Services (Ofwat) regulates our service to customers by setting a series of key performance indicators as service level targets for us to meet. It then assesses our performance via these indicators.

For more information

See the *Economy and Key Performance* section at www.southernwater.co.uk/sustainability

Our aim is to provide a high level of service at all times. We have defined our customer service standards in a charter, *Our Promise to You*, available from our Customer Service Centre or www.southernwater.co.uk/library.

We meet quarterly with WaterVoice Southern to discuss customer feedback and issues arising. A common theme over the past year was the water industry five-yearly review producing business plans for the 2005-2010 period.

For more information

See the *Economy and Key Performance* section at www.southernwater.co.uk/sustainability

WaterVoice is an organisation representing customers in England and Wales.

An example of how we demonstrate our commitment to customer service is through the intense training programme given to our Customer Services Centre employees. Our dedicated Customer Service Centre is widely promoted in our region. We produce an annual magazine for our customers, called *Splash*. This details our services, facts and figures about our business, our work in the community and water-saving ideas.

Customer calls logged with technical issues over 2003-2004 were handled by our

dedicated technical unit. They arrange to undertake investigative sampling e.g. samples from customer taps, as necessary. These drinking water samples are then analysed in one of our laboratories with results determining if any further action is needed.

We also arrange for customer plumbing inspections where needed. Conclusions of our investigations are confirmed to our customers in writing and details held on our information management system for customer enquiries. Customer satisfaction questionnaires are sent monthly to a random selection of customers contacting our Customer Service Centre. Responses are assessed to review our customer services operations.

We have provided domestic customers with a free leak detection service since 1997. This includes a repair service for supply pipes. Levels of activity for this repair service increased by 43% this year. This was as a direct result of active leakage detection effort across the company. The services are promoted on our website and in the *Water Leaks* information booklet available on request. We offer up-to-one-hour-free leak detection services to our domestic customers. Domestic customers qualify for one free supply pipe repair per occupancy of the property.

Information on water saving tips and devices is available at our website in our *WaterWise* section, and we also made the following leaflets available over 2003-2004:

- Tips on Taps
- Garden Tips
- Morning, Noon or Night
- Fit a meter
- Save Water Save Money

Our customer magazine, *Splash*, contained many water efficiency tips in 2003-2004. We included a detailed water efficiency checklist and a feature on water efficient gardening. Customers wishing to assess their consumption in detail can use our web-based calculator. *Splash 2004-2005* includes a simple quiz-based water audit and offers advice on reducing water use.

We encourage our customers to partner with us on conservation issues, providing tips on how to get involved. We commissioned independent research to assess customer perceptions to the issue of sewer flooding. Seven focus groups were conducted at different locations across our region. To establish how important the issue of flooding was to our customers, we asked them to discuss what they felt were the main social-environmental problems within their areas.

Conclusions from the research were that with no experience of sewer flooding, customers did not think of it as an issue of public concern. When provided with information about its different forms and impacts our respondents voiced concerns about its distressing effects. Our respondents agreed that action should be taken. Research results fed into our business plan for the forthcoming 2005-2010 investment period.

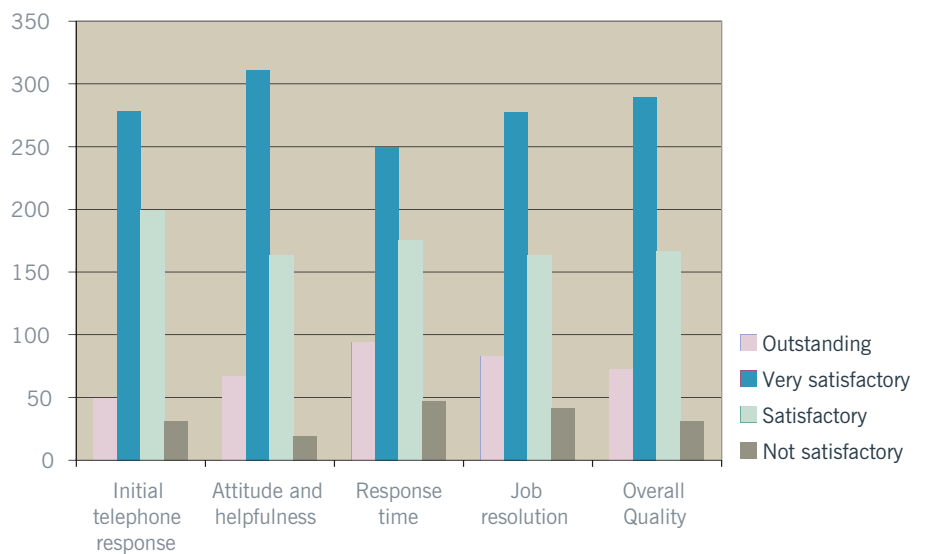
LINKS: www.watervoice.org.uk | WaterVoice Southern 0845 758 1658; email: southern@watervoice.org.uk
www.ofwat.gov.uk

We also commissioned independent research 2003-2004 to identify and monitor shifts in customer satisfaction levels. A representative sample of Southern Water customers participated. Results are shown in the chart opposite. This study follows on from independent research undertaken in previous years. 91% of our customers responded positively to the overall service Southern Water provide.

We continued to offer a range of assistance to our customers with additional needs. In order to give the best possible service, we keep a confidential register of customers with additional needs. This ensures our employees know about special circumstances our customers may have. Customers can register their details for this service. Customers can also ask to join our password scheme. This ensures that should we call on them at home, we can quote the agreed password to provide additional assurance of our identity.

For more information
 See our website at
www.southernwater.co.uk/customerservice

Customer responses to questionnaires 2003-2004



Domestic customers experiencing difficulty in paying for water use and wastewater services can find assistance through applying for support. Additionally, payment terms can be agreed in person with one of our local representatives, all of whom operate to strict terms and guidance for these agreements. We encourage all our customers experiencing

difficulty with payments to contact us as soon as possible so we can help. We aim to make payment as easy as possible by providing many different payment methods. Customers whose surface water drainage does not enter the public sewerage system can claim a rebate on this part of their wastewater service from their bill.

LINKS: [Southern Water Scientific Services: analysis@southernwater.co.uk](mailto:analysis@southernwater.co.uk) 01273 625237 | www.southernwater.co.uk/scientificservices | www.watermark.gov.uk

Commercial Customers

We offer an extensive range of sampling and laboratory analysis services to our customers. Our laboratories are certified to ISO17025 (Internal Standards Organisation quality management standard) and are audited

annually in accordance with Drinking Water Inspectorate requirements.

We also provide our commercial customers with water supply and wastewater treatment

services and offer more specialist monitoring, sampling and analytical services. Our range of services to commercial customers includes the following:

	Water quality and supply	Water systems hygiene	Water efficiency	Wastewater infrastructure, Waste management	Land and contamination risk
Key account customer service	Range of services offered to meet specific customer needs, Water Regulations advice.	Range of services offered to meet specific customer needs, specialist civil engineering services.	Consolidated billing, monthly consumption reports, savings through water management services.	Range of services offered to meet specific customer needs, advice on environmental regulations, specialist civil engineering services, advice on trade and wastewater discharges.	
Monitoring and sampling	Public and private water supply precision sampling and laboratory analysis, bottled water, pathogenic organisms, reservoir profiling.	Legionella risk assessment and analysis, swimming pools and spas, hot/cold water systems, cooling towers.	Water metering, data logging, water leakage detection and repair, consumption management, water efficiency audits and advice.	Wastewater infrastructure survey and repair, landfill and leachate monitoring, compost quality, odour survey.	Site investigation, remediation monitoring.
Analysis	Precision sampling techniques and laboratory analysis.	Precision sampling techniques and laboratory analysis.		Waste categorisation.	Sample analysis, groundwater protection.
Emergency response	Impact surveys, hygiene surveys, contingency planning.	Impact surveys.	Leak investigation.	Impact surveys.	Impact surveys, groundwater protection.
Process sampling	Water quality reports.			Discharge consent compliance, sludge disposal assessment, Groundwater protection.	Groundwater protection.
Process monitoring	Water quality reports.		Meter replacements and installations.	Discharge consent compliance, in-situ direct and remote monitoring applications, groundwater protection.	In-situ direct and remote monitoring applications, groundwater protection.
Infrastructure services	Infrastructure survey and repair, system refurbishment, structural integrity investigation of potable mains.	Infrastructure survey and repair, system refurbishment, testing, chlorination and de-chlorination of potable systems.	Leak investigation, infrastructure survey and repair, system refurbishment, concrete repairs.	Wastewater infrastructure survey and repair, sewer repairs, manhole repairs, concrete repairs.	
Construction services	Laying of water mains, meter installation.	Laying of water mains.	Laying of water mains, meter installation, joint sealing, crack injection.	Laying of gravity sewers or rising mains, manhole construction, sewer meter flumes, pressure cleaning, joint sealing, crack injection.	
Topographical services	Mapping and validation of water distribution networks, infiltration studies.	Infiltration studies.	Mapping and validation of water distribution networks.	Location and survey of underground assets, Infiltration studies.	Partial and full topographical surveys.

LINKS: www.southernwater.co.uk/library | www.waterconservation.co.uk |

Commercial Customers

We have developed a Business Customer Charter that sets out our commitment to our business customers. We forwarded our Charter to WaterVoice Southern for their comment prior to publication.

Over the last year we continued to deliver regular water consumption reports to key business customers and to advise them on water efficiency. Leakage specialists worked with our commercial customers to minimise water-wastage. Our commercial infrastructure specialists investigated foul water systems and offered assistance with site surveys to our customers raising concerns over aspects of their wastewater operations.

We monitored water consumption data for our multi-site customers. We identified account managers with responsibility for monitoring their accounts on a monthly basis. These account managers ensure any queries relating to these accounts are addressed.

Our inspectors conducted 12 water audits of commercial premises in 2003-2004. Our free advice pack for business customers, *Small Changes Big Savings: Business* was updated and continued to be available for those customers wishing to conduct their own water audit. 132 packs have been sent out to customers on request. We estimate business water savings through 2003-2004 initiatives to be 0.05Ml/day.

We continued our involvement in Simple Utility Management workshops. These were organised by local authorities. Through these, we provide advice on water efficiency to local businesses and in 2003-2004, took part in two workshops in Sussex, a further three were cancelled due to a disappointing lack of uptake.

We worked alongside the UK water industry, National Health Service Estates and Watermark to promote water efficiency to hospitals in our region. An information pack, *Water Efficient Hospitals*, was developed to explain:

- Where and how water is used in a hospital
- How to monitor usage and identify wastage
- How to save water without compromising hygiene, infection control and the care of your patients
- Where to get further help

We distributed the pack via meetings with 15 hospital managers and direct mailing to 44 smaller hospitals.