

Water Leak Remission Policy

Policy Owner	Chief Executive
Policy Sponsor	Policy & Regulatory Committee
Approved By:	Waikato District Council
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Introduction

Waikato District Council (“Council”) charges for the volume of water a customer receives (delivered through a water meter). When a leak occurs at a property, this affects the water bill as the consumption increases, and/or the water discharged reduces.

Council offers a leak remission to ensure customers understand the value of water and therefore encourage customers to fix leaks promptly. The leak remission is provided to offset some of the costs associated with the loss and to acknowledge the prompt repair of the leak.

Objective(s)

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Assist people in situations where water usage is higher than usual and can be attributed to an undetected water leak; and
- Allow Council to provide relief to domestic metered water users where there is evidence that repairs have been carried out within 20 working days of the leak being identified.

Definitions

An undetected leak is a leak which is completely concealed either underground, under a slab or in a wall cavity. Typically, these are leaks which occur in underground pipes leading into a household or pipes inside walls and ceilings in a home, garage or outbuilding, or hot water cylinders, on the customer side of the point of supply.

Plumber’s Invoice is a GST invoice which relates to the repair of the leak and is to contain:

- A valid GST number;
- The name of the plumber who completed the repair;
- Contact details;
- The plumber practicing license number; and
- Comprehensive description of the repair work and materials used.

Supporting Evidence of the leak includes but is not limited to:

- Photos and/or video footage clearly showing the leak (such photos or footage showing the extent of the leak with the cause clearly visible); or

- A report from a licensed or certified plumber confirming that the leak has occurred, where and how the leak was found, dates and an opinion as to how long the leak had been occurring.

Application

This policy applies to domestic customers and under extraordinary circumstances, non-domestic customers may be considered.

Principles

The property owner is responsible for maintaining after the point of supply all water pipes, fittings and/or plumbing and ensuring that it is in working order.

The responsibility of water leaks between the water outlet and the point of supply is ultimately the owners' and any water rates remitted will be a cost to other water users.

That property owners should take action within a reasonable period of time to avoid wasting water.

Conditions and Criteria

Council may remit half of the excess charge (measured over the last two bills) on water consumption rates where all of the following applies:

- (a) An application for remission has been received within 6 months of leak being detected; and
- (b) Council is satisfied that the excessive consumption is caused by a leak on the property (subject to the provision of Supporting Evidence of the leak); and
- (c) The leak has been repaired within 20 working days of being identified (unless evidence has been provided that the services of an appropriate repairer could not be obtained within this period); and
- (d) Proof of the leak being repaired by a licensed or certified plumber (Plumber's Invoice).

A remission may be granted where the water usage during the period of the leak is at least 50% higher than normal usage for the property (the normal average usage is based on the previous two bills where an actual read occurred at the property).

A remission will not be considered for leaks:

- (a) that are or should be visible (including but not limited to header tanks, overflows from toilets, above ground pipes or fittings and those attached to raised flooring or in walls or ceilings); or
- (b) originating from pipes or fittings:
 - i. on farms, commercial, industrial, public service, educational, or social service properties; or
 - ii. in unoccupied properties (regardless of temporary or long term); or
 - iii. in reserves; or
 - iv. from irrigation, stock water, swimming pools, ponds, landscaping or similar systems on occupied properties; or
 - v. where no stopcock on water tank.

Council will only accept and consider one application for leak remission from the owner of a property once every five years. However, if the entire supply line between the point of supply and dwelling is replaced, Council may consider a further remission.

In extraordinary circumstances where a remission application would fall outside of the criteria above or where a remission of more than 50% is appropriate, a remission may be granted at the sole discretion of the Council's Authorised Officer. This may apply in situations where a water leak remission application has been declined, and where this could lead to cases of genuine financial hardship for the owner, or where timely detection of a leak could not have reasonably occurred.

An application for leak remission will be processed within 20 working days from the date on which the application (including all required information) is received.

Significance *(refer to Significance and Engagement Policy)*

The Water leak remission policy triggers the Significance and Engagement policy through the community interest threshold. Section 109 of the Local Government Act provides what is required for a rates remission policy and specifies that the policy must be reviewed once every 6 years using a consultation process that gives effect to s82.

Relevant Documents/Legislation

Local Government Act 2002

Local Government (Rating) Act 2002

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed as deemed appropriate by the Chief Executive, but not less than once every six years.