

It's time to talk about your pipes and taps

Water certification: your home,
your responsibility

Why water safety matters in your home



Did you know that nearly half of UK homeowners have installed water fittings like taps, shower heads, or under-sink filters in the last five years? Yet our research shows that only 7% fully understand the water regulations that govern these installations.

This matters because the water in your home isn't just about convenience, it's about health and safety. The pipes, taps, and fittings that deliver water throughout your home need to meet specific standards to keep your drinking water safe and prevent damage to your property.

This guide will help you understand what you need to know about water regulations in simple terms, how to check if your fittings comply, and what to do if you're concerned.



What are water regulations and why should you care?

Water regulations may sound like something only plumbers need to worry about, but they affect every homeowner in the UK. The UK's Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations and byelaws* set the rules for water fittings in homes connected to the public water supply.

Surprisingly, manufacturers can legally produce non-compliant products and shops can legally sell them, it's you, the homeowner, who is legally responsible if they're installed in your property.

Over half of UK adults have never heard of these regulations before, creating a knowledge gap that could put your family's health and your property at risk.

What the regulations cover

These rules apply to everything that carries or uses water in your home:

- Taps and mixers in kitchens and bathrooms
- Shower heads and hoses
- Pipes and fittings
- Water filters and softeners
- Hot water systems
- Outside taps and hosepipes

Who's responsible?

If you own your home, you are legally responsible for ensuring all water fittings comply with regulations—even if you didn't install them yourself. This means:

- You could be liable if non-compliant fittings cause problems
- Water companies have the right to inspect your property
- You might have to pay for fixes if problems are found
- In serious cases, you could face legal action



*There are actually separate regulations for each country in the UK, The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 (England and Wales), The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Byelaws 2014 (Scotland), and Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009

The risks of non-compliant water fittings

Using non-compliant water fittings isn't just about breaking rules, it can have real consequences for your home and family.

Health risks

Non-compliant fittings might:

- Release harmful chemicals into your drinking water
- Allow dirty water to flow back into clean water pipes
- Create breeding grounds for harmful bacteria

Property damage

Our research found that 43% of people correctly identified property damage as a risk of non-compliant fittings. This can include:

- Leaks that cause water damage to floors, walls, and ceilings
- Flooding from catastrophic failures
- Pressure problems that damage other parts of your plumbing system

Legal and financial consequences

If your water fittings don't comply with regulations:

- Your home insurance might not cover damage
- You could face costs for mandatory remedial work
- In serious cases, you could face prosecution
- Your water supply could be disconnected in extreme situations





How to check if your water fittings comply

Our research found that 80% of homeowners have never checked their water fittings for compliance, and 63% don't know how to. Here's a simple guide to help you:

For existing fittings

1. Look for certification marks
2. Check visible fittings like taps and shower heads for marks such as:
 - NSF REG4 Certification
 - WRAS (Water Regulations Advisory Scheme) approval
 - KIWA certification
 - Regulation 4 Kitemark
3. Check for signs of problems
 - Unusual taste or smell in your water
 - Discoloration of water
 - Leaks or drips
 - Unusual noises in your plumbing system

4. Review your documentation
 - Find paperwork from when fittings were installed
 - Check for certificates of compliance
 - Look for product warranties and guarantees

When buying new fittings

Our research found that 9% of homeowners buy water fittings from low-cost international online retailers, where verifying compliance with UK regulations could be challenging.

Safer options include:

- Established UK plumbing suppliers
- Major home improvement stores
- Manufacturer-approved retailers
- Plumbing professionals who supply their own fittings

When buying a new home or building an extension

When you are purchasing a new property or having any renovation or extension work carried out in your home, always check with your architect or specifier to confirm the pipes and fittings are compliant with Regulation 4.

Your compliance checklist:

- ✓ Fittings have visible certification marks
- ✓ No unusual tastes, smells, or colors in your water
- ✓ No leaks or drips from any fittings
- ✓ You have documentation for major installations
- ✓ Work was done by a qualified professional
- ✓ Products were purchased from reputable UK suppliers

If you answered "no" to any of these, you might want to look more closely at your water fittings.



What to look for

When shopping for water fittings, check for:

1. Certification marks

Look for certification marks on the product or packaging that are UKAS accredited:

Mark	What it means	Example
NSF REG4	Comprehensive testing for UK compliance	

2. Clear documentation

The product should come with:

- Installation instructions that mention UK regulations
- A declaration of compliance
- Contact details for the manufacturer

3. Product description

The listing should specifically state that the product is:

- Suitable for UK use
- Compliant with UK water regulations
- Made from materials approved for drinking water

Warning sign

Be cautious of very cheap products with no mention of UK compliance or certification.

*other marks indicate compliance such as WRAS, always ensure they are certified by UKAS accredited bodies.



What to do if you're concerned

For minor concerns:

- Contact the supplier or manufacturer to check compliance
- Look up the product online to find certification information. You can [check all NSF REG4 certified products here](#)
- Consider replacing questionable fittings when convenient

For more serious concerns:

- Consult a qualified plumber for an assessment
- Contact your water company for advice
- Consider having a water quality test performed

If you find non-compliant fittings:

- Plan to replace them with compliant alternatives
- Prioritise fittings connected to drinking water
- Keep records of all replacements and new installations

Getting help and more information

You don't have to figure this out alone. There are resources available to help:

- NSF: Visit www.nsf.org/uk-reg4 for information about certification and compliance
- Your water company: Most offer free advice about water regulations
- Qualified plumbers: Look for those with Water Regulations qualification
- Citizens Advice: Can help with consumer rights if you've purchased non-compliant products

Frequently asked questions



Q: As a consumer, am I not protected by the Consumer Rights Act and the Consumer Protection Act if water fittings I have purchased are not compliant with regulation 4?

A: As a consumer, your protection under the Consumer Rights Act 2015 and Consumer Protection Act 1987 has important limitations when it comes to water fittings that don't comply with UK Regulation 4. While these laws do protect you from genuinely defective products, non-compliant water fittings present a different situation. The key distinction is:

- The Consumer Protection Act protects you from defects in products as manufactured and sold
- However, water regulations (specifically the Water Supply Regulations) place responsibility on property owners to ensure installations comply with standards

When you purchase non-regulation 4-compliant taps, the issue isn't that the taps are "defective" under consumer protection laws, they may function exactly as designed. The problem is that using them in UK plumbing systems violates separate water regulations.

Once you install items in your property, you become responsible for compliance with building and safety codes. The UK's consumer protection framework balances protecting you from truly defective products while still holding you accountable for proper installation and regulatory compliance.

Q: How do I know if my plumber understands water regulations?

A: Ask if they have completed a Water Regulations course or are a member of an approved contractors' scheme.

Q: Can I install water fittings myself?

A: Yes, but you're still responsible for ensuring they comply with regulations. For complex work, consider hiring a professional.

Q: What should I do with old fittings when I replace them?

A: Dispose of them responsibly at your local recycling center. Don't sell or give away non-compliant fittings.

Q: How often should I check my water fittings?

A: It's a good idea to visually inspect visible fittings annually and after any plumbing work.

Peace of mind through simple steps



Understanding water regulations doesn't have to be complicated. By following the simple guidance in this guide, you can:

- Protect your family's health by ensuring safe drinking water
- Prevent costly property damage from leaks and floods
- Avoid potential legal and financial consequences
- Gain peace of mind knowing your home is safe and compliant

Remember, water safety is too important to leave to chance. Taking a few minutes to check your fittings and make informed choices when buying new ones can save you from significant problems down the line.



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About NSF

NSF is a global independent organization that tests and certifies products for the water, food, life sciences and consumer goods industries. Founded in 1944, NSF is committed to improving human and planet health. For more information about water regulations or NSF certification, visit [nsf.org](https://www.nsf.org).

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