

Rain tank water metering for fixed or volumetric wastewater: Q & As

BACKGROUND

You will need to consider the following information before deciding whether a rain tank water meter is right for you.

Q. Will I benefit from installing a rain tank water meter?

A. The benefits of rain tank water metering for fixed/volumetric wastewater charging depends on the amount of water your household uses and the cost of your water meter installation.

Based on the rain tank water metering trial that Watercare undertook from November to May 2013, households of 1-3 people who are careful with their water use could save around \$10 to \$25 per month. Households of 4 or more people who are very low water users may also benefit. With a rain tank water meter, your wastewater charges will have two parts:

- a 'volumetric charge' which is based on the amount of water flowing through your rain tank water meter.
- a 'fixed charge' which is each household's contribution to network maintenance.

For this year's rates, see Watercare's 'water & wastewater charges' on the website www.watercare.co.nz

Q. Will I still benefit from installing a rain tank meter if I have a large garden?

A. The volumetric component of Watercare's wastewater tariff is calculated according to a fixed percentage of metered water supplied, irrespective of what this water is used for. For most domestic users, this is set at 78.5 percent.

Q. How much will it cost to install a water meter on my rain tank?

A. The cost of installation will vary depending on the location of your pump (inside or outside) relative to the meter placement and your rain tank's plumbing system. A typical installation of a rain tank water meter and strainer (filter) is expected to cost between \$400 and \$650. Some people may face additional plumbing costs to maintain or upgrade their private plumbing before a meter can be installed.

These costs are not included in the figures above. You should obtain a quote from a Certified Plumber before deciding whether to proceed. Watercare will also charge a \$50 application fee to cover administration and additional costs associated with meter reading on private property.

Q. Who is responsible for the rain tank water meter?

A. You are responsible. Your rain water tank and its associated plumbing are on your private property. However, to switch to fixed/volumetric wastewater charging, you must meet Watercare's installation requirements and standards, including the terms and conditions set out on the application form.

Q. My water is supplied by a private bore; can I sign up for fixed/volumetric wastewater charging?

A. Yes, as long as the water meter can be installed after the pump in a location that the meter reader can access easily on foot.

Q. I have a business; can I sign up for fixed/volumetric wastewater charging?

A. Yes, from July 1 2014.

Q. What is the process for installing a rain tank water meter and changing to fixed/volumetric wastewater charging?

A. You are responsible for arranging the installation of a water meter to Watercare's installation requirements and standards, including the terms and conditions set out on the application form.

Q. Can I provide my own water meter?

A. Yes, so long as it's an Elster Kent meter of the appropriate size for your plumbing system.

Q. Where do we source the meters from?

A. From a plumbing supply store – either directly or through your plumber.

Q. How much do the meters cost?

A. Prices are set by the supplier.

Q. Watercare has previously stated that meters were available at a discounted price of \$115, including the Y strainer. Why is that no longer the case?

A. Watercare previously arranged for its own supplier to provide meters to approved installers at a discounted price, on the proviso that installers themselves charged the end-user the cost price only. As installations can now be carried out by any certified plumber, it is no longer practicable to continue this arrangement.

Q. Can I undertake my own water meter installation?

A. No, you must use a Certified Plumber. Work on drinking water systems such as rain tanks is considered sanitary plumbing under the Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006 and as such must be undertaken or supervised by a certified plumber. Watercare recommend you do check that your plumber is certified.

Q. Where can the water meter be located?

A. Refer to Watercare's meter installation guidelines.

Q. What if access to my property for meter reading is particularly difficult?

A. Please ensure any significant access issues are highlighted on your application form. If your property is particularly difficult to access, and if there are significant health and safety issues for the meter reader, you may be able to install a remote meter reading device which can be attached to your water meter at your cost.

Q. Can we use an automatic or remote meter reader?

A. Where there is access or other issues, you may be able to install a remote meter reading device which can be attached to your water meter at your cost.

Q. Can I arrange for someone to check my property before I install my meter?

A. In the first instance you should talk to your Certified Plumber to discuss the installation requirements.

Q. Can I still connect to the public metered water supply?

A. Yes, if it is available in your street. An application can be made through new connections to connect to the public water supply. Refer to 'New Connections' on the Watercare website or phone our customer centre on (09) 442 2222.

Please note that a meter connection, processing fee and infrastructure growth charge will apply.

METER READING AND DAY TO DAY OPERATION

Q. What if my water meter is inaccurate or malfunctioning?

A. Where Watercare suspects a water meter is malfunctioning; we will notify you and require that the meter is tested. Watercare reserves the right to return your account to the standard fixed wastewater charge after the following actual reading if the faulty meter has not been checked, repaired or replaced. If you suspect a problem you should contact your installer or local plumber.

Q. What if there is a leak in my water meter or pipes?

A. You are responsible for the ownership and maintenance of all the pipes and the water meter associated with your private rain tank system. If you have issues with a leak or other problems with your water supply, then you should contact your installer or local plumber. If a leak is identified and fixed, a leak rebate for a portion of the wastewater charge may be available. Refer to 'Leak Allowance' on the website for further information.

Q. My water meter has just been installed and there is a problem with my water supply – who do I call?

A. Call your installer or a plumber.

Q. Will I need to replace my water meter in the future?

A. Yes. Water meters are mechanical devices and are subject to wear and tear. They become inaccurate over time and need to be replaced. Variable water pressure and debris may also affect the durability of the meter. Even if your water meter is not suspected of being faulty, after a prolonged period of use Watercare may request that you have your meter tested and/or replaced. The normal operating life of a quality water meter is estimated at 15 years.

Q. My meter is installed however I am having problems with water supply into my house

Contact your installer or a plumber.

Q I have just purchased the property and did not realise I owned the water meter. Who do I contact to get it looked at?

Contact a plumber.

Q I want to get my water meter moved. What must I do?

Contact a plumber.