

# DIGITAL METERING – DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT POLICY

## 1. Purpose

This Policy sets out how South East Water manages and uses data collected from digital water meters and data logger devices installed at customers' properties.

This Policy has been written in accordance with clause 5.3 of the Water Industry Standard – Urban Customer Service (July 2023).

## 2. Scope and Context

This Policy applies to the data South East Water collects from digital water meters and data loggers installed at customer properties.

South East Water installs a water meter at every eligible property connected to our water network to measure the volume of water supplied. These measurements are primarily used for billing customer water use.

Currently, most South East Water customers have a mechanical water meter installed on their property. Mechanical meters require readings to be taken manually to record water usage for each billing period.

To access water usage data more easily, South East Water is rolling out digital meters throughout the network. Over the coming years, digital meters will be installed at new properties and will replace nearly all mechanical meters at existing properties.

Digital meters have the ability to transmit water usage data allowing customers to see their daily use and learn more about their consumption patterns. This also allows South East Water to notify customers of potential leaks on their property, reducing water usage and saving customers money on their bills. This enables South East Water to draw more meaningful insights about water use and water loss in the network. This aids timely action to repair leaks and to drive informed decision making about services and maintenance.

As the rollout of digital meters scales up, more and more customers will be upgraded to a digital meter. Customers who wish to keep their existing mechanical meter may apply to opt-out of receiving a digital meter, subject to South East Water approval. If a customer elects to opt-out, they will not have access to the benefits offered by the new functionalities of digital meters.

## 3. Digital meters

### 3.1. What is a digital meter?

Digital meters perform the same main function as mechanical meters, which is to measure the amount of water supplied to a property for billing purposes. However, they also incorporate communications technology that allows for this information to be wirelessly transmitted to South East Water rather than needing to be manually read. Additionally, the

technology in digital meters records and transmits other flow, network and meter performance data which can be used to provide and improve South East Water’s services.

In some cases, such as with many large business customers, rather than installing a digital meter, a data logger is affixed to an existing mechanical meter. Data loggers operate in a very similar way to digital meters. References in this Policy to a digital meter should also be read as including a data logger.

### 3.2. How do digital meters work?

Digital meters communicate with South East Water in a way that is similar to a mobile phone. They contain a SIM card and transmit data using ‘Narrow Band Internet of Things’ (NB-IoT) technology. The digital meter transmits data to the telco network via a secure channel, and the telco network then transmits the data to South East Water. All transmissions are end-to-end encrypted in transit.

Digital meters do not contain information that identifies an individual customer, such as a customer’s name or address. Each digital meter is allocated a unique device ID, similar to a serial number. The data recorded by the meter is linked to the device ID. When a digital meter is installed at a property, the unique device ID is linked in South East Water’s system to the property address. When the digital meter transmits data secure processes automatically match the raw data to the associated property and then to the customer account(s) linked to that property.

Digital meters are battery powered and will still operate if there is an electrical power outage. However, if a telecommunication outage occurs, which happens from time to time, digital meters have the capacity to remember the last 10 days of data logged. This is retained until communication is restored. Additionally, the telco networks may store the data for a short period, generally between 30 and 90 days.

### 4. What data does South East Water collect from digital meters?

South East Water collects the following data from digital meters:

Data	Description
<b>Register Read</b>	Amount of water supplied to a customer each day.
<b>Interval Data</b>	Amount of water supplied to a customer during a particular interval (recorded every 30 minutes, configurable down to 5 minutes).
<b>Alarms and Notifications</b>	Digital meters are programmed to send alerts to South East Water about functionality issues, including things like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• battery status;</li> <li>• weak signal strength; and</li> <li>• tampering.</li> </ul>
<b>Water Sensor Data</b>	Digital meters include sensors which notify South East Water about water flow in the network, including things like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• water pressure;</li> <li>• water temperature; and</li> </ul>

Data	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>potential leaks in the network.</li> </ul>

## 5. How does South East Water use and disclose data?

South East Water uses and discloses data collected from digital meters to conduct and improve its business activities. Data collected from digital meters is primarily used for the purposes set out below:

Data	Use
<b>Register Read</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A reading taken any time from a water meter of the total volume of water recorded through the meter. A property’s water usage for a billing period is the difference between the register read at the end of one billing period and the register read at the end of the next (approximately 90 days). This is the water usage on a customer’s bill.</li> </ul>
<b>Interval Data</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remotely detecting water leaks and notifying affected customers.</li> <li>Monitoring water usage patterns throughout the network.</li> <li>Supporting customers to reduce their water usage.</li> </ul>
<b>Alarms and Notifications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remotely monitoring digital device performance and responding to detected faults.</li> </ul>
<b>Water Sensor Data</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remotely monitoring network performance.</li> <li>Remotely detecting water leaks.</li> <li>Responding to faults and emergencies.</li> </ul>

South East Water also regularly use and disclose data collected from digital meters for the following purposes:

- Assisting customers, e.g. responding to billing and other enquiries;
- Checking the performance of groups of digital meters;
- Analysing water usage patterns to improve water network operations;
- Undertaking research, studies and analytics relating to South East Water’s functions (e.g. demand forecasting); and
- Improving how we manage our water systems.

Data collected from digital meters will generally be used and disclosed in an aggregated, or de-identified form. Data will not be aggregated or de-identified where South East Water is using or disclosing it for a purpose relating to a particular customer. An example of this situation is where a customer’s water usage is disclosed to a research partner for the purposes of analysing and supporting customers in managing their water usage.

South East Water links data collected from digital meters to a specific location or customer by combining the data with other securely held information. The information combined depends on the specific function or activity that we require the information for.

### Disclosure to third parties

South East Water often engages or collaborates with third parties for the purposes described above. Digital meter data may therefore be disclosed to contractors, consultants, universities, industry bodies, research institutions and government bodies in connection with these purposes.

### Disclosure to landlords

South East Water understands that occupiers may be concerned that usage information can be accessed by the property owner. Due to the way customers are billed, access to water usage information varies depending on the nature of the tenancy:

- **Residential tenancies:** If a customer is registered as a residential tenant their landlord won't be able to see their Interval Data.

If the landlord receives the bill for both service charges and water usage at the property a customer is occupying, the water bills sent to the landlord will include the Register Read recorded to calculate the usage for that bill. They may also be able to see the interval data if they have access to the mySouthEastWater portal.

South East Water will notify a customer and their landlord if a potential leak is detected at the property and may inform the landlord of the size of the leak, but will not share Interval Data with them. This is done to give them the opportunity to investigate and promptly repair the leak. If the customer is not a registered tenant, only the landlord will receive notifications about potential leaks at the property they are occupying.

- **Commercial tenancies:** If you are a commercial tenant, your Interval Data may be disclosed to your landlord in connection with water supply functions, such as managing leaks.

As your landlord receives the water bill for the property, they will see the Register Read.

South East Water will notify your landlord if a potential leak is detected at the property. This is done to give them the opportunity to investigate and promptly repair the leak.

## 6. Data retention

Data transmitted by digital meters is collected and stored in South East Water's secure databases. It's also stored in cloud-based servers in Melbourne and Sydney, as well as other South East Water data centres located in Victoria.

South East Water retains data collected from digital meters for at least the period required by the *Public Records Act 1973 (Vic)*.

South East Water stores data in the form it was collected, in a de-identified format indefinitely. This raw data is stored securely and kept as a historical reference for use in connection with the purposes described in this Policy.

## 7. Access

Customers who receive water usage charges will see their billable Register Reads on each water bill.

Customers with a digital meter and access to South East Water's online portal can see their water usage in hourly intervals. This can help to understand their usage patterns and improve water saving efforts.

### Access to usage history

A customer may access their Register Reads for the preceding three years via the mySouthEastWater portal or by contacting South East Water directly. Please note that access to usage data may be refused to preserve customer privacy or safety in accordance with the information handling procedures in South East Water's Domestic and Family Violence Policy.

If usage data is held from more than three years ago and it is not accessible on the mySouthEastWater portal, a customer may request access to that data by contacting South East Water and paying an applicable access fee.

## 8. Privacy

The data collected from digital meters is generally not about an individual who is identified or reasonably identifiable and, therefore, will not usually constitute 'personal information' for the purposes of the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)*.

However, there may be some circumstances where the data collected is about an individual who is identified or reasonably identifiable (e.g. where the meter relates to a residential property only occupied by a single resident). In these circumstances, to the extent that the data constitutes personal information, it is handled in accordance with the privacy practices set out in South East Water's Privacy Charter.

South East Water's Privacy Charter can be accessed at [southeastwater.com.au/about-us/corporate-information/our-policies/privacy-charter/](https://southeastwater.com.au/about-us/corporate-information/our-policies/privacy-charter/)

## 9. Related Policies

BS1055 Privacy Charter  
BS2792 Domestic and Family Violence Policy  
BS2485 Customer Charter

## 10. Legislative Compliance

Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)  
Public Records Act 1973 (Vic)  
Water Act 1989 (Vic)  
Water (Estimation, Supply and Sewerage) Regulations 2014 (Vic)  
Water Industry Standard – Urban Customer Service (July 2023)

**11. Related Documents**

Not Applicable.

**12. Approval**

Approved by: Executive  
Approved on: 21/08/2024  
Sponsor: General Manager Digital Utility  
Implementation: Group Manager Digital Field Services  
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