

CODE OF PRACTICE



Delivering what matters

Water Supply Services for Domestic Customers



We are committed to giving you the service you expect, all day, every day. We work hard to make sure you always receive a high-quality service and we monitor our performance very carefully.

Delivering the very best water is our top priority. The quality of drinking water in Northern Ireland must meet high standards.

All of our information leaflets and letters are available:

- in Braille
- in large print
- on CD and audio tape.

**All information
leaflets can be
downloaded from
our website.**

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The quality of your water

Your water supply must meet certain standards set out in law. Every year we test over 110,000 water samples to make sure your water is clean and safe. We take these samples from our water treatment works, service reservoirs and taps in homes.

If you would like written details of water quality in your area (this is known as the Drinking Water Quality Register) or a copy of our yearly report on the quality of drinking water, please phone Waterline.

You can also make an appointment to inspect the test results free of charge.

What to do if you are not happy with the quality of your water

If you are worried about your drinking water, please phone Waterline. If appropriate, we will take samples to test and let you know the results.

Our promises

- If you think the water has made you ill, and you call us before 4pm, we will visit before midnight on the same day to take a sample. If you call us after 4pm we will visit you before midday the following day to take a sample. We will let you know the results within 72 hours.
- If we find a problem that might affect your health, we will tell everyone in the area what to do. This may mean boiling water before you use it, or (in exceptional circumstances) not using it until we have carried out more tests.
- If the water supply is not safe to drink (after boiling), we will provide another supply, for example bottled water or water that you can collect from temporary tanks.

We will give this advice by:

- making announcements during news bulletins on TV and radio stations
- putting information on our website and in local newspapers
- posting a notice to you
- phoning or visiting you if necessary.



Testing for lead in your water

There is almost no lead in drinking water when it leaves our treatment works or our water main. Any lead in drinking water usually comes from lead service pipes or lead pipes in your home (mainly found in older buildings). If you are worried about lead in your drinking water, we can test a sample of your water. For advice on replacing lead pipes, please phone Waterline. There is more information on lead pipes on page 10.

Supplying water to you

We aim to provide you with enough water for everyday things such as drinking, washing, cooking, running your central-heating and flushing the toilet.

Water pressure

We aim to provide water at a pressure which reaches the top of the highest floor of every building (unless this floor is so high that water will not flow to it under gravity from our service reservoir or tank supplying it).

We aim to provide a higher standard of service than this, but there are still some areas where the pressure does not reach the minimum standard. We keep a register of these properties.

If your home is less than 10.5 metres below the point at which the water leaves the reservoir, we can get you to fit a cistern capable of holding enough water to last you for 24 hours. If we ask you to do this and you disagree, you may ask the Utility Regulator to make a decision.

You can normally expect to receive water pressure of at least 15 metres head at the stop tap at the boundary of your property.

This means that water will rise and fill a storage tank on the second floor of your home. Usually, it will also mean that it takes about 30 seconds to fill a 4.5 litre bucket from your kitchen tap. Many things can affect water pressure and how quickly the water flows, including:

- how high your home is above the water main
- how much lower it is than the reservoir
- how far your home is from our water main
- the condition of your supply pipe
- the plumbing inside your home
- leaks from pipes or burst water mains
- whether you share a supply pipe with another property

- whether other people in the area are using water at the same time
- the number of appliances using water at the same time in your home
- whether we are carrying out maintenance work.

Our promises

- If you think your water pressure is too low, we will look into it free of charge. Once we have investigated, we will tell you what we have found and what we may be able to do.
- We aim to give you water at a pressure of at least 15 metres head at the boundary of your property.
- We will keep a register of properties where pressure is less than the minimum standard, so that we can target improvement work.

If you lose your water supply

We aim to provide a continuous supply of safe drinking water to each customer connected to our system.

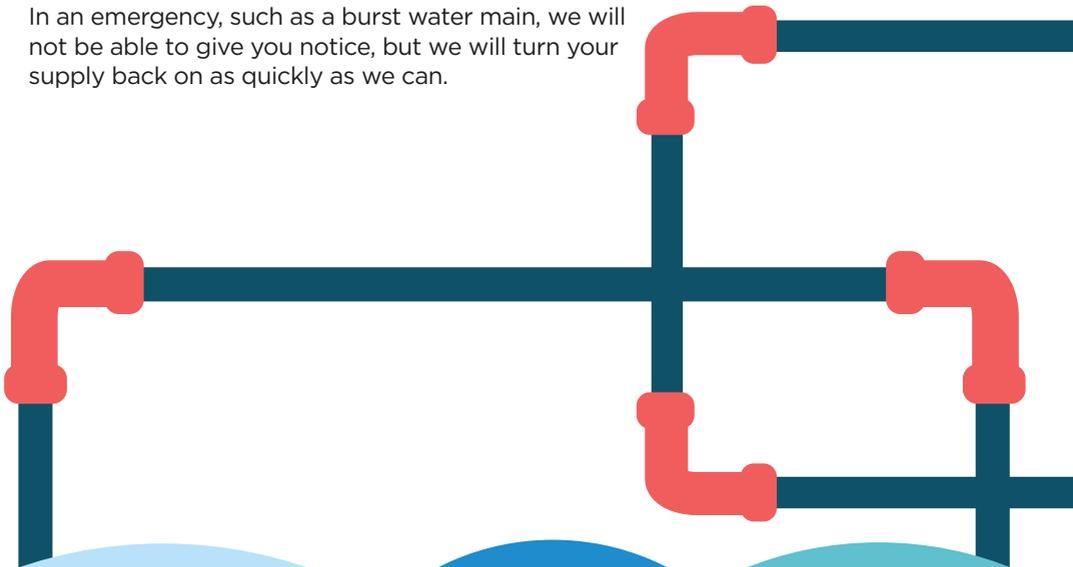
If you lose your water supply, first check with your neighbours to see if their water supply is also affected. If your neighbours have a water supply it is likely that there is a problem with your private pipework.

Sometimes we may have to turn off your water supply to carry out essential work.

Please phone Waterline or check our website to find out:

- why you have lost your water supply; or
- when we are planning to turn your water supply back on.

In an emergency, such as a burst water main, we will not be able to give you notice, but we will turn your supply back on as quickly as we can.



Our promises

- If we plan to turn off your water for longer than four hours, we will give you at least 48 hours' notice in writing to tell you:
 - the date and time we will turn off the water
 - when we expect to turn it back on.

In an emergency:

- If your local water main has failed, we aim to turn your supply back on within 12 hours.
- Repairs to larger water mains may take longer, but we aim to turn your supply back on within 48 hours.
- If we know you will not have water for more than 24 hours, we will make alternative water supplies available.

As part of our regular programme of checking for leaks, we sometimes turn off sections of the water main. We try to do this overnight (normally between 11pm and 5am) to cause as little disruption as possible. As this usually lasts less than four hours, we do not normally tell you about it.

Customer Care services

If you have a medical condition which needs a continuous supply of water please let us know. Contact Waterline and register on our free Customer Care Register so we can tell you beforehand if your water supply may be interrupted by any work we are planning.

If you are on our Register and you don't have water, we will prioritise you to get bottled water or a small tank of water.

Our Customer Care Register offers a range of free additional services to customers who are older, have a disability, have a serious medical condition or need extra help for any other reason. Please contact Waterline for more details.

Protecting water supplies

There are strict rules to prevent the public water supply being polluted, wasted, misused or used without permission. Our Water Regulations Enforcement team can give you free advice. For more information, please phone Waterline.



Saving water

Whatever the weather, water is precious.

We should all do everything we can to save it. On average, each of us uses about 150 litres of water a day.

We are committed to encouraging people to save water. As part of our water efficiency plan, we do the following:

- We work to identify and reduce the number of leaks on our pipes.
If you notice a water leak, phone Leakline on 08000 282011.
You can get more information in our booklet 'Dealing with Leaks'.
- We promote appliances, facilities and practices that help save water.
- We work to increase the amount of water that is recycled.
- We produce information booklets on water conservation and water audit.

Here are some easy ways in which you can save water:

- Fit a trigger gun to your hosepipe to control the flow. If you don't, you can use as much water in one hour as a family uses in a whole day.
- Collect rainwater in a water butt (a water tank which collects and stores rainwater that runs off rooftops), then use it to water your garden, or wash your car.
- Fix dripping taps as soon as possible.
- Have a short shower instead of a bath, as this will use much less water (unless you have a power shower).
- Only use your washing machine or dishwasher with a full load.

If you are looking for a new washing machine or dishwasher, choose one that saves water (this also saves electricity, which will save you money).

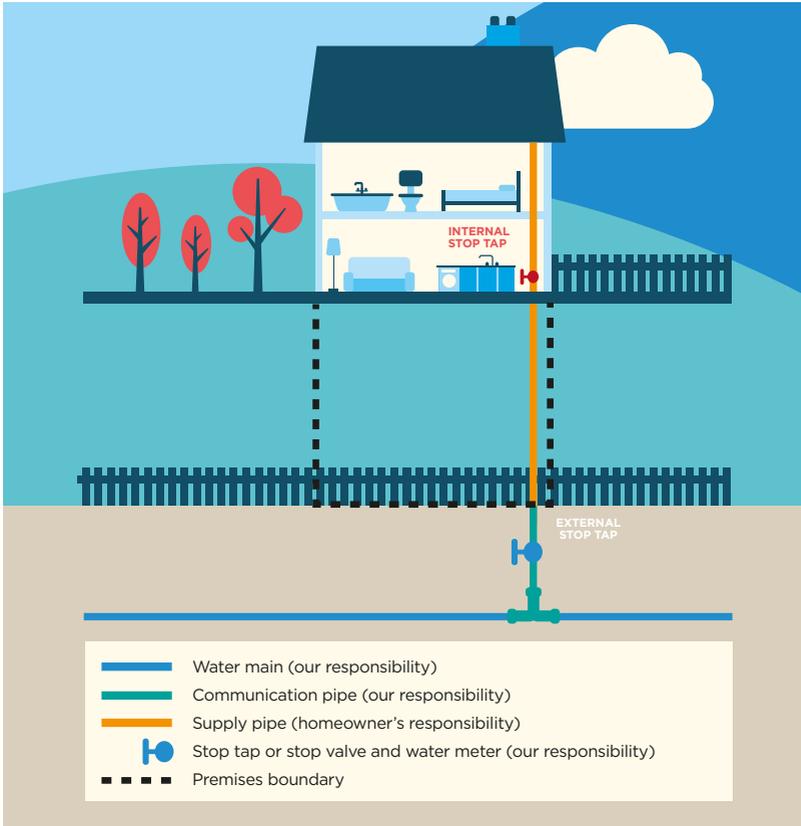
- Lag your pipes (insulate them) to protect them from frost and to prevent them from bursting.

For more information, visit our website or phone Waterline.



Responsibility for pipes

The diagram below shows who is responsible for which pipes.



What we are responsible for

We are usually responsible for looking after the water main and the pipe that runs from the water main to the boundary of the street, including the stopcock. This is known as the 'communication pipe'.

What you are responsible for

You are usually responsible for any pipe between the boundary of the street (or from the water main if it is not laid in the street) and your home. This is called the 'supply pipe'. You are also responsible for the plumbing inside your home.

For more information on who is responsible for shared water supply pipes, visit our website or phone Waterline.

Leaks

We are responsible for repairing leaks on our water pipes. You are responsible for the pipework within your property. If there is a leak on your supply pipe, we will tell you to repair or replace the damaged section of pipe.

If you think you have a leak, you can get more details in our 'Dealing with Leaks' booklet.

Lead pipes

Most lead found in water comes from lead pipes supplying old buildings and from plumbing inside the home. If you replace the lead supply pipe in your home, we will replace our communication pipe free of charge.

In some circumstances, you may be able to get a grant from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) towards the cost of replacing your lead supply pipe.

If you are interested, please phone NIHE on 028 9024 0588 before you start work, or, you can visit their website at www.nihe.gov.uk.

If a lead supply pipe is shared and you and your neighbours have agreed to replace it, you will need to lay separate pipes from each property, which we will connect to the water main.

Our promise

- If you replace your lead supply pipe we will replace our communication pipe free of charge. Please let us know if you are going to replace your supply pipe so we can arrange to replace our pipework.

Shared supply pipes

Sometimes properties share a supply pipe. These would usually be older, terraced houses.

If you share a supply pipe, you may sometimes find the water pressure in your home is too low, particularly when you use water at the same time as your neighbour.

We usually recommend that each of you should have a separate supply pipe. Please phone Waterline and we will be happy to give you advice about separating shared supply pipes and any charges you may need to pay.



Maps of the public water mains

We keep maps of the public water mains. We do not have records relating to the pipework within private property.

To get a copy of a map by post, please fill in an application form and send it to our Developer Services Team at:



Northern Ireland Water

188 Larne Road
Ballymena
BT42 3HA

You can download an application form from our website.

There is a small charge for this service.

To discuss this application, or to make an appointment to look at our maps free of charge at a designated Northern Ireland Water office, please contact us on Waterline.



**Waterline:
03457 440088**

Work on public roads

Many of our water mains are laid under public roads and footpaths.

Our promises

When we carry out work on public roads, we will:

- provide advance notice to road users where necessary
- cause as little disruption as possible
- make sure the area is safe for the public at all times
- put the road or footpath back to the standard set out in the Street Works (Northern Ireland) Order 2007.

Work on private land

There will be times when we need to enter your property to lay pipes, maintain existing pipes or inspect the water system.

We will always try to talk to you about the work before we send you a notice, but if we have not been able to do so we will talk to you during the notice period about what we plan to do.

In an emergency, we may need to enter your land without giving you notice. We will try to contact you first.

When we are working on your land we will try to cause as little disruption, inconvenience or damage as possible.

When we finish the work, we will make good (or pay you compensation for) any loss or damage caused by or as a result of our work.

Our Code of Practice on Work on Private Land will spell out in more detail our promises to you.

Getting land to lay new mains

Sometimes we need to get land and property to lay new water mains.

If we need to do this with your land we will try to agree this with you and will pay you compensation.



Our promises

- If we need to make changes to a water main that goes through your land, we will tell you in writing at least 42 calendar days before the work starts.
- If we are going to put in a new water main, we will advise you in writing providing 3 months' notice before we start the work.
- If we need to use our right to acquire land, someone will visit you to explain what will happen and tell you what your rights are.

These time limits do not apply for water mains you or a developer asks for.

Building over or near a water main

You are not allowed to build over or near a public water main. If you have found that a public water main is within four metres of your work (or you believe this is the case), you must contact our Developer Services Team straight away on Waterline.

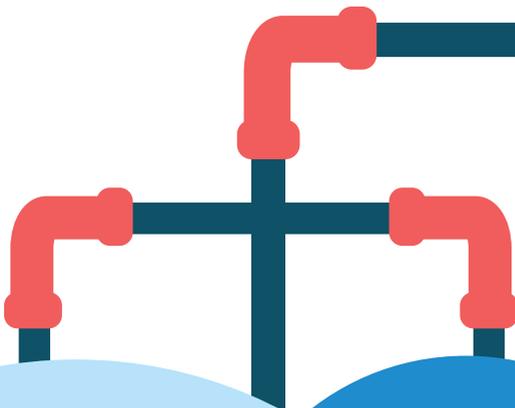
Water mains are protected under legislation. If you do not tell us you are building over or near a water main, we could take legal action against you.

You can find full details in our developer's information pack. Copies of the relevant section of the Developer's Information Guidelines can be downloaded from our website.

If you want to discuss what you need to do, call our Developer Services Team on Waterline.

Moving an existing water main

If a water main crosses your building site, or is within four metres of any building work you are planning, you may need to consider building somewhere else or moving the water main. If it is practical to move the water main, we will do this but you must pay our costs. For more information contact us on Waterline.



Connecting new pipes to the water main

Every property must have its own connection to the water main.

How to apply to be connected to the water main

If you want us to connect you to a public water main, you must apply to us in writing. You can get an application form and information on charges by phoning Waterline or you can download them from our website.

Our promises

We will tell you our decision within 14 calendar days of the date we receive your application.

If we approve your application, we will tell you:

- the charges you will have to pay
- the conditions you will need to meet.

You will normally have to:

- lay your part of the service pipe (we must be satisfied that the pipe meets our standards)
- pay all our costs
- make sure your part of the pipe meets the regulations covering water fittings
- get any permission you need from other landowners.

If there is already a water main in your street, our charge will include:

- the costs of connecting your property to the main, which includes:
 - excavating the road
 - laying our parts of the service pipe (this is also known as the 'communication' pipe)
 - connecting the service pipe to the water main
 - providing a stopcock
 - fitting a meter (non domestic properties)
 - reinstatement of the road
 - connection of your supply pipe.
- a contribution towards our overall cost of supplying water to new customers - this is known as an 'infrastructure charge'.

The work will not start until you have paid the appropriate charge and met any conditions we have set.

It is illegal for anyone apart from us or an authorised contractor to connect a property to a water main.

Once you have done all the work to the correct standard, we will connect you to the water main - normally within 21 calendar days.

You must lay your part of the service pipe before the agreed date of connection. If you do not do this and we are not able to carry out the connection on the agreed date we may charge you for the visit.

If we refuse your application

If we refuse your application, we will tell you why. If you do not agree with our decision, you can contact the Consumer Council (details on page 20).

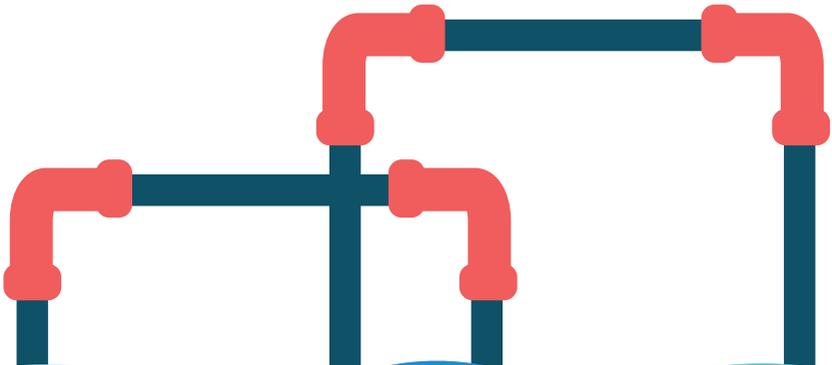
What to do if there is no water main to connect to?

If there is no water main, you can ask us to provide a new one (either on your own or with your neighbours). This is known as a 'requisitioning process'.

We will provide a new water main if you pay our charges. We will give an allowance towards the cost of the new water main.

More information is available in our developer's information pack. Copies of the relevant section of the Developer's Information Guidelines can be downloaded from our website.

If you want to discuss what you need to do, call our Developer Services Team on Waterline or visit www.niwater.com/services-for-developers/



Our promises

- We will tell you our decision within two months of the date we receive your application.
- If we have agreed to provide a new water main, it must be available for you to use within three months of the day you pay the charges or the day we agree the connection details, whichever is latest. Some major schemes take longer than three months, so we may extend the time limit for providing the water main by agreeing this with you.
- If you have paid a deposit for a water main extension and we do not provide it by the agreed date, you will be entitled to interest for each three-month period the water main is delayed. The rate of interest is set by the Utility Regulator.

Electrical earthing

Never earth your electrical supply to your water supply pipe

You are responsible for safely earthing electrical appliances in your home. You should get advice from an electrician approved by the National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contractors (NICEIC). Many houses built before 1966 rely on their water pipe as an earth, but because there are more and more plastic pipes, this is not as effective as it used to be. If you are not sure whether your home is earthed properly, ask an electrician.

You can contact NICEIC using the information below:



NICEIC Head Office

Warwick House
Houghton Hall Park
Houghton Regis
Dunstable, LU5 5ZX



Phone: 0333 202 5721



Email: enquiries@niceic.com



Website: www.niceic.com

Bogus callers

Some criminals visit people's homes and pretend to be working for us. We call these people 'bogus callers'.

These callers can be men or women. They may try to trick you by saying there is an urgent problem with your water.

All our staff and contractors working on our behalf carry identity cards with their photo and the NI Water logo on it.

If we are carrying out work, our staff may need to go into your property.

Always ask to see their identity card.

If someone comes to your door claiming to work for us, please do the following.

- Check that your windows and front and back doors are locked.
- Stop and think, 'Am I expecting anyone?'
- Ask the caller to put their identity card through your letterbox, rather than opening the door.
- If you have one, attach your door chain before you open your door.

If the identity card is genuine it will have the following information on it:

- A picture of the person at your door
- A unique serial number
- The date the card was issued
- The person's name
- The person's signature
- Our logo.



You can check that the person is who they say they are by phoning Quick Check on 101.

Your call will be answered by a trained police call handler who will take the details from you and will then contact Northern Ireland Water to determine whether the caller is genuine. Our staff will not mind waiting while you check their details.

If you are not sure, do not open your door.

Password scheme

If you are on our Customer Care Register, you can ask for a password to help you identify our staff. Please arrange a password with us. Our staff will always use this password when they visit you.

If someone claims to work for us but does not know your password, do not let them in.

Instead, please get in touch with us and we will check to see if the caller really works for us.

To register for our Customer Care Services please call Waterline.

What to do if you are not happy with our services

We are committed to giving you the service you expect, all day, every day.

If you are disappointed with our service, we want to hear from you. This gives us the chance to put things right for you and make improvements so that other customers may benefit.

You can contact us using the information below.



Northern Ireland Water

PO Box 1026
Belfast
BT1 9DJ



Phone Waterline: 03457 440088



Text Relay Service: 03457 440088



Fax: 028 9016 8002



Email: waterline@niwater.com



Website: www.niwater.com

You can ask for a free copy of our complaints procedure or you can download it from our website.



Responding to you

These are the standards you can expect from us when you contact us.

Our promises

Answering your questions

- When you call we will answer the phone within 30 seconds.
- If you phone us we will try to deal with your questions straight away.
- If you write to us we will reply within 10 working days.
- If we need to investigate your complaint we will explain what we need to do and we will write to you within 10 working days.

Keeping appointments

- When we make an appointment with you we will tell you whether we will visit before or after 1pm.
- We will try to keep all appointments. If we need to cancel or change an appointment, we will give you at least 24 hours' notice.
- If an emergency stops us from keeping an appointment, we will try to let you know.

Further information

This leaflet is part of a set of leaflets about our codes of practice. These leaflets give you information about us and our services.

The other leaflets in the set include the following.

- 'Sewerage services for domestic customers' – This gives you information about the sewerage system, who is responsible for pipework, flooded sewers, new connections and our right to enter your property.
- 'Dealing with leaks' – This gives you information on our code of practice on leaks and who owns pipes.
- 'Work on private land' - This gives you information on our code of practice if we need to work on private land.
- 'Billing and metering for non-domestic customers' - This gives you information on our codes of practice on billing and metering arrangements.
- 'Our complaints procedure' – This gives you information on who to contact and how we will manage your complaint.

- ‘Customer Care Register’ – This gives you information on a range of free services we offer customers with particular needs.

We also offer a range of other leaflets, such as ‘Using Water Wisely’ and ‘Lead in Drinking Water’.

To ask for any of the free leaflets, please phone Waterline or visit our website.

Independent help and advice from the Consumer Council

If you remain unhappy with how we initially dealt with your complaint or would like free, independent advice, you can contact the Consumer Council. The Consumer Council has the power to act on your behalf and investigate your complaint about our services; they can provide assistance if you need help when making a complaint.



Consumer Council

Floor 3, Seatem House, 28-32 Alfred Street, Belfast, BT2 8EN



Phone: 0800 121 6022



Text Relay Service: 028 9025 1600



Fax: 028 9025 1663



Email: contact@consumercouncil.org.uk



Website: www.consumercouncil.org.uk

Other useful contacts

The Utility Regulator

The Utility Regulator is the independent non-ministerial government department responsible for regulating Northern Ireland Water.



The Utility Regulator

Queens House, 14 Queen Street, Belfast, BT1 6ED



Phone: 028 9031 1575



Fax: 028 9031 1740



Email: info@uregni.gov.uk



Website: www.uregni.gov.uk

Drinking Water Inspectorate

If you have complained to us about the quality of the water you receive and you are not happy with our response or feel we have not fully solved the problem, you can contact the Drinking Water Inspectorate, which will carry out a further investigation



Drinking Water Inspectorate

Klondyke Building
Cromac Avenue
Gasworks Business Park
Lower Ormeau Road
Belfast, BT7 2JA



Phone: 028 9056 9282



Email: dwi@daera-ni.gov.uk



Website: www.daera-ni.gov.uk



Northern Ireland Water

PO Box 1026
Belfast
BT1 9DJ

northern ireland
water



Delivering what matters



Leakline: 08000 282011



Waterline: 03457 440088



Text Relay Service: 03457 440088



Email: waterline@niwater.com



Website: www.niwater.com