

Outdoor drinking fountains range from historical features to new digital units. This fact sheet sets out our recommendations for installing and maintaining a digital unit in our supply area. For advice on older non-digital fountains please contact us. Please note this fact sheet does not cover drinking water fountains installed within a building, as these usually have the same requirements as a standard tap connection.

SES Water supports the growing number of drinking water fountains as this reduces the consumption of single-use plastic and provides the public with easily accessible good quality drinking water – provided the installation is checked and maintained adequately. Due to the environmental and health benefits, we will generally not charge for the water if the unit is available to the public.

Where should I install the fountain?

If an existing supply pipe exists and it is not lead, we would propose connecting it. Alternatively, a new connection to the water main can usually be arranged, at an additional cost. Please note that some installations require planning consent so we recommend that you contact the local authority's planning team.

How should it be installed?

Drinking water fountains will need to have a separate water meter and stop valve so it can be isolated from the water network without affecting other supplies. These need to be accessible for maintenance purposes. A key to operate the stop valve should be kept near the fountain so that it can be turned off in an emergency. This key should be of a universal type so that we are also able to turn off the unit if we are called to site when the local key is not accessible.

Water pipes and fittings must be approved and compliant with Regulation 4.1.a of the Water Supply (Water Fittings) regulations 1999 to ensure it meets water quality standards, and fitted with a double check valve to protect

against backflow into the network. It needs to have a drainage connection so that the unit can be flushed through and drained down, as well as to capture unused water pouring into the dispenser area. The unit can be stand-alone or wall-mounted but must be securely bolted. We recommend units that are designed to fill bottles only, i.e. without a spout for drinking directly from the unit (this is known as a 'bubbler') since this is less likely to have water quality issues.

It is good practice to carry out a risk assessment of the site to evaluate and mitigate against problems such as freezing, vandalism and contamination from animals.

The unit should be labelled with contact details so that users can easily report issues.

Does the water need to be checked?

Before the fountain is made available to users the water supply needs to have a water quality certificate to confirm it meets the requirements of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2016 in terms of its 'wholesomeness'. This certificate should be sent to us. We recommend that the water is sampled on a regular basis (for example quarterly). An action plan should be in place detailing the procedures and remedial work required for a water quality failure. This document should also include the named individuals responsible for carrying out these actions.

Maintenance Requirements

The owner of the unit is responsible for its maintenance. However, we suggest that the unit is checked and cleaned frequently, such as daily or at least several times a week. The cleaning regime and frequency will depend on the site, usage and sampling results. You may need to consider the risk of legionella – we recommend that you contact a specialist consultancy for advice regarding this.

The unit and fittings should be checked for leakage and any leaks rectified quickly.

During winter, the unit may need to be isolated and drained down to prevent damage caused by freezing.

Outdoor Drinking Fountains



Records of cleaning and maintenance should be held for at least one year to provide evidence that a maintenance plan is in place.

Contact Us

Our Developer Services Team and Water Regulations team are available on 01737 772000. You can email

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water fact sheet

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