



**Cracking
down on
illegal
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We're cracking down on those who steal our water by illegally connecting to our network using an unauthorised and unlicensed standpipe. We've been investigating illegal standpipe use for the last two years and during this time referrals have quadrupled to around 20 each month.

Background.

Reports of illegal standpipe use have increased rapidly in recent years, made possible by raising awareness and helping people understand the risks of unauthorised standpipe use.

It's really important to keep track of who and what is being connected to our network for several reasons:

- If a connection is made without the correct valve, water supply can be contaminated or water pressure can be affected in the surrounding area
- If a standpipe is attached without being metered, the water being used isn't accounted for and is therefore classed as leakage
- If people who aren't properly trained connect a standpipe to our network, it can damage our assets.

We have many hydrants across our network that are most often used to connect a standpipe to create a temporary water source from our mains. These are usually used by industries such as tankering and plant hire, sweepers and road cleaning, as well as temporary building supplies and by firefighters.

Any customer that wants to use a standpipe on our network must apply for a licence and an authorised standpipe which comes with a meter and valve to stop dirt from entering the water supply. All of the authorised standpipes to be used on our network are blue with a yellow tag.

- **Thousands of litres of water are stolen from our network each day using illegal standpipes**
- **Illegal standpipes can affect water quality and pressure and damage our assets**



Thames Water authorised standpipes (above) and an illegal connection (left)



Water theft crackdown.

Since we extended our investigation team at the end of 2016 we have:

- Received over 400 reported incidents of illegal standpipes being used
- Sent out over 400 warning letters
- Issued 85 retrospective charges
- Brought four prosecutions against companies for illegal standpipe use
- Engaged and educated around 50 companies of our standpipe policy.

One cleaning firm pleaded guilty to 18 offences in Croydon and Reading after illegally connecting standpipes to the network. This company was ordered to pay fines and costs totalling almost £15,000.

Another street cleaning firm have admitted to 12 offences in Battersea, London, and was ordered to pay more than £5,000 in fines and costs.

It's vital we find and stop people illegally connecting onto our network, to stop thousands of litres of drinking water being lost every day and help protect water supplies now and for future generations.

To report any water network abuse, email illegalconnections@thameswater.co.uk or call our customer services on 0800 980 8800.