Your pressure sewer
Home owner’s manual

For more information call 1300 650 422 or visit us at westernwater.com.au
USING THIS MANUAL

This manual is a guide to the operation and maintenance of the pressure sewer system installed on your property. The system is easy to use and we strongly recommend that you take a few minutes to familiarise yourself with how it works.

There are some basic things that you should know about your pressure sewer system. These include:

- how to care for your unit
- what happens if the alarm sounds
- what you need to do before you go on holiday.

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Why install a pressure sewer system?
Pressure sewer systems are an economical and environmentally-friendly way of collecting, transporting and disposing of wastewater from households. They are often used in areas when the landscape is either very hilly or very flat, in areas which regularly flood or have high water tables, or where it is impractical to install other types of sewerage systems.

What is a pressure sewer system and how does it work?
A pressure sewer system is made up of a network of fully sealed pipes which are fed by pumping units located at each connected property. The pumping unit processes the household wastewater and transfers it to the pressure sewer located in the street via a small pipeline within the property. The pressure sewer forms part of the overall pipe network which ultimately transfers the wastewater to the nearest wastewater treatment facility – this could be within the surrounding area or many kilometres away.

Once installed, the only visible parts of the pressure sewer system are the tank lid and control panel.

What components make up a pressure sewer system?
The pressure sewer system on your property is made up of five key elements, as shown in the diagram below.

Pressure sewer system components

1. House service line
   This is a small diameter pipe (not dissimilar to a large sprinkler system pipe) which connects the pumping unit on your property to the pressure sewer in the street.

2. Boundary valve kit
   Ensures that wastewater which is already in the pressure sewer cannot re-enter your property and enables maintenance staff to isolate you from the system in the event of an emergency.

3. Pumping unit
   This includes a small pump, storage tank, and level monitors which are all installed underground so that only the top of the storage tank (or lid) is visible.

4. Property drain
   This pipe connects your house to the riser which is connected to the pressure sewer storage tank. As the asset owner, any ongoing maintenance of this drain is the property owner’s responsibility.

5. Control Panel
   This is a small box which is mounted to the wall of your house containing all the electrical controls for the pumping unit including both the audible and visual alarm systems.
How do pressure sewer systems work?

The main component of the pressure sewer system is the pumping unit which is installed on your property. The pumping unit works in the following way:

**Step 1**
Wastewater enters the storage tank from the household drains (including sinks, toilets, showers, baths etc.)

- **Pump off**

**Step 2**
The wastewater level rises above the “pump on” level and the pump automatically turns on.

- **Pump on**

**Step 3**
When the wastewater level is reduced below the “pump off” level, the pump automatically turns off.

- **Pump off**

**Step 4**
In the event of a power outage or pump failure, the wastewater level may rise above the “alarm level”.

- **Pump off**

   The audible and visible alarm will automatically be activated.

   See the section titled “What you need to know about alarms” for further instructions on what to do if the alarm is activated.

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Important information

What items must NOT be flushed down your household drains?

It is very important that the following items are NOT flushed down any of your household drains (sinks, toilets, showers, baths etc.) and into the sewerage system, whether conventional or pressure system:

- glass
- metal or metal filings
- seafood shells
- goldfish stones
- nappies, socks, rags or clothes
- plastic objects
- sanitary napkins or tampons
- kitty litter
- explosives
- lubricating oil and/or grease
- strong chemicals
- gasoline
- rainwater.

If the pumping unit fails due to any of the above banned items entering the storage tank, the customer may be responsible for meeting the cost of any repairs.

If you are unsure about what items can go into the pressure sewer system, please call Western Water on 1300 650 425.

Why can’t rainwater go into the pressure sewer system?

Pressure sewer systems are only designed to accept household wastewater, not stormwater or rainwater. Rainwater must not be directed into the sewerage system for the following reasons:

- it will increase the costs of pumping for you
- it can lead to alarms being activated
- in extreme situations, the pumping unit may overflow.

If the alarm regularly activates during or after rainfall, you should contact Western Water.

Why must I keep heavy weights off the lid?

The lid of the storage tank is not strong enough to withstand the weight of very heavy objects (greater than 500 kilograms). As a guide, the following items should be kept off the lid:

- cars and other vehicles
- ride-on lawn mowers.

The storage tank lid and boundary valve kit must not be covered by any landscaping works. You must also ensure that sufficient space is left around each of these components to enable access should it be required.
What you need to know about alarms

Why is my alarm going off?
There are a number of reasons why your alarm may be activated. The following table provides you with a step-by-step guide to dealing with an activated alarm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>How to do it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alarm sounds</td>
<td>Turn off the audible alarm</td>
<td>- Press the button on the underside of the control panel to disable the audible alarm.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- The audible alarm will automatically shut off after about 10 minutes (regardless of whether the button on the underside of the control panel is pressed).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flashing light</td>
<td>Report alarm activation</td>
<td>- The flashing light will only turn off if one of our representatives resets it, or the problem which has triggered the alarm is resolved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power outage</td>
<td>Wait one hour before reporting</td>
<td>- If the alarm activates following a power outage, please wait for one hour before contacting us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>- The alarm may sound when the power is restored as the wastewater level in the storage tank may have built up to above the alarm level.</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>- Once power is restored, the pump will recommence pumping but may take up to an hour for the wastewater level in the tank to drop below the alarm level (this is due to a number of other pumps trying to empty their tanks at the same time).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- You should attempt to minimise wastewater generation during power outages to minimise the amount that the wastewater level in the storage tank rises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power outage for longer than eight hours</td>
<td>Minimise wastewater generation and advise us</td>
<td>- Take steps to minimise wastewater generation by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- not turning on clothes washers while the alarm is active</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- keep showers brief</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- where a bath was filled, leave the plug in until after the alarm is cancelled or bucket out the water onto the lawn</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- switch off any drainage (automated or not) from swimming pools or spas until after the power is restored.</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>- Advise us of extended power outages, particularly if it appears that the duration may exceed eight hours (excluding time when the residents are asleep).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- In the event of extended power outage events, we may need to organise for your storage tank to be pumped out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If alarm sounds frequently and then turns off</td>
<td>Investigate</td>
<td>- Determine if there is any sudden discharge (such as from a swimming pool) and see whether the alarm is in response to this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- If the alarm sounds during or after rainfall, rainwater may be entering the storage tank.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Should the problem continue to occur, please contact us to investigate and repair as appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your neighbour’s alarm sounds</td>
<td>Contact us</td>
<td>- If you suspect your neighbour is not home, please contact us to inspect the property.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- The audible alarm will automatically shut off after a period of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officer attends</td>
<td>Create clear access</td>
<td>- Ensure our representative has access to and from the pumping unit as transportation of a faulty pump may be required.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please call 1300 650 425 to report any alarms
What happens if I want to extend my house or landscape the garden?

Extensions to your house
If you are extending your house, you must contact Western Water to seek advice on the suitability of your existing pumping unit prior to the commencement of any construction activities.

Moving the pumping unit will be dependent on the layout of your land as all wastewater from your house must gravitate into it.

If we approve your application, the costs associated with moving the pumping unit and house service line will be your responsibility (a quotation will be provided to you prior to works being carried out). Any changes to the original installation need to be clearly documented and submitted to us to ensure that in the event of an emergency, our representatives can locate the key system components.

House service line
The house service line is a polyethylene sewer pipe which connects the pumping unit on your property to the pressure sewer in the street. It is worth familiarising yourself with the exact location of the house service line so that it can be moved (if required) or avoided if work is being done on your property.

The house service line can be found using one of the following methods:
- detectable marker tape is buried just above the pipeline and can be located by your builder
- if your builder cannot detect the tape, contact us on 1300 650 422 and a representative will peg the line for you at a cost.

Bungalows or other dwellings on your property
It may be possible for your pumping unit to service both the main and additional dwellings on your property, depending on the layout of your land. Please contact us for advice in relation to this matter.

Landscaping
While landscaping over the house service line is permitted, if repairs are required you will be responsible for the costs of any reinstatement works to repair any damage caused. The storage tank lid and boundary valve kit must not be covered by any landscaping works. You must also ensure that sufficient space is left around each of these components to enable our representatives to access them, if required.

Garages, car parks, decking and garden sheds
Garages, car parks, decking and garden sheds are not to be built over the pumping unit or boundary valve kit. Western Water approval is required to build any of these structures over the house service line.

Installing a swimming pool or large spa
Installing a swimming pool or large spa can result in large amounts of water being discharged quickly to the pumping unit during activities such as backwashing filters or emptying. In some cases, the pumping unit may not be able to cope with this and the alarm may activate or the pumping unit may even overflow.

Please contact us for advice in relation to this matter.

What special precautions do I need to take when going on holidays?
If you are going on holidays for more than three days, your pumping unit will need to be flushed out to prevent potential odour problems.

It is suggested that you complete the following activities before going away:

Flush the system
Run at least 190 litres of water into your household drains in order to activate the pressure sewer pump. This can be achieved by filling a bathtub and then emptying it, or doing a couple of loads of washing and using the shower just prior to going on holiday.

Keep the power to the pumping unit turned on at all times
If there are any leaking taps or appliances within your household, there may be a small accumulation of wastewater in the storage tank. If the pumping unit is turned off, it could potentially overflow and there would be no audible or visible alarm to warn you or your neighbours of the problem.

If you fail to clean your system before going on holidays and we have to flush out your storage tank in response to complaints from residents in the area, you may be required to pay for the costs of this work.
**Pumping unit repairs and warranties**

**What happens if my pumping unit needs to be repaired?**

Pumping unit repairs are generally simple. In most cases, maintenance staff will be able to make immediate repairs to your pumping unit.

If the problem is more serious, your pumping unit may be replaced immediately and taken back to our workshop for repairs. Repairs and/or replacement of the pumping unit will normally be completed within an hour of our representative arriving at your property.

**Pumping unit servicing**

The average pumping unit only requires servicing once every eight years.

Please report any pumping unit faults to us.

**Pressure sewer bursts**

If you notice wet ground or water escaping from your plumbing, it is possible that a burst may have occurred. Such breaks are rare and are more likely to occur due to other work being carried out near the pipes.

If you become aware of such a fault, please contact us on 1300 650 425 immediately. Following this, try to minimise water usage until the problem is fixed.

**Warranties and repair costs**

Only our licensed representatives carry out repairs on the pumping unit. Work by others that was not authorised by us in writing may void warranties and you may become liable for future costs.

If pumping units require replacement, you will not be required to meet any of these costs.

The only exceptions to this rule are if you have:

- emptied substances into the pumping unit which are banned
- accessed the pumping unit. The storage tank lid must remain sealed at all times and warranties are exempt if you open it
- interfered with the house service line or boundary valve kit
- blocked off the vents to the storage tank by covering it over.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System part</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>How to do it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pumping unit</td>
<td>Contact us</td>
<td>• We will carry out repairs to all points of the pressure sewer system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Owners will not incur any cost for repairs which result from the normal operation of the system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• A replacement pump will be inserted into the storage tank if the existing pump requires significant repairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewer or pump repairs</td>
<td>Minimise wastewater production</td>
<td>• If repairs are required to the pressure sewer or the pumping unit, you should minimise wastewater production until repairs are completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary valve kit repairs</td>
<td>Do not access them yourself. Contact us and wait for our representative to operate valves</td>
<td>• Ensure our representative has access to and from the pumping unit as transportation of a faulty pump may be required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• We will operate the valves in your boundary valve kit if required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Under no circumstances should owners open or tamper with the valves inside the boundary valve kit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Your Connection to the Pressure Sewer System

Terms and Conditions as determined under Section 145 of the Water Act 1989

1. Definitions
   a. In these terms and conditions: you and your refer to the owner of the property connected, or to be connected, to our pressure sewer system. We, us and our refers to Western Water.
   b. These terms and conditions apply to the property and owner who returned the signed Terms and Conditions Application Form to Western Water.
   c. If there is any inconsistency between our Customer Service Charter and the conditions of connection contained within the Your Pressure Sewer Home Owner’s Manual, the manual prevails.

2. Consent to Connection
   We consent to connection
   a. under Section 145 of the Water Act 1989
   b. subject to these terms and conditions
   c. on the basis that these terms and conditions are binding on future owners
   d. in accordance with the Western Water Customer Charter and Your Pressure Sewer Home Owner’s Manual.

3. Power
   We will arrange for a pump unit to be connected to the power supply on your property.
   If your electrical supply needs to be upgraded to comply with current electrical standards, you will be liable for any costs.
   If your electrical supply meets the current standards but requires an upgrade to connect to the pump unit, we will pay for the cost of these works.
   You will be required to pay for the ongoing cost of power used by the pump unit.

4. Property drain
   You will be required to arrange for a licensed plumber to connect your property drain to the capped inspection shaft (also referred to as the 27A) provided by us on the inlet of the tank. You are liable for the cost of these works.

5. Installation
   We will install a boundary valve kit, the pump unit and connecting pipe work.
   In addition we will install the control panel and the associated electrical cabling to the pump unit and your electrical switchboard.
   We will pay for the cost of these works.

6. Ownership and Maintenance
   a. You will own and be responsible for any costs associated with, maintaining the capped inspection shaft and riser and property drain, in good working order. Any work must be carried out by a licensed plumber.
   b. We will own and maintain the boundary valve kit, pump unit, connecting pipe work up to and including the fitting, (known as a 27A) located just before the riser and capped inspection shaft.
   c. We will maintain but you will own the control panel, and the electrical cabling to the pump unit and your electrical switchboard.
   d. In an emergency (as indicated by the red flashing light on the control panel) or when you discover anything wrong with the pump unit (including a power failure), the control panel, electrical cables or connecting pipes excluding the property drain, you must notify Western Water immediately on 1300 650 425.

7. Damage
   a. If you, or someone else for whom we are not responsible (such as visitors) damages the boundary valve kit, pump unit, control panel, electrical cabling, connecting pipe work or any other part of the system, we will arrange for the repairs to be made. You must reimburse us for the cost of any such repairs.
   b. If Western Water, or someone for whom we are responsible, damages your land or anything on it while carrying out work, the legislation under which we operate imposes obligations on us in relation to rectifying the damage or compensating you.
   c. If you become aware of any damage to any part of the system you must report it to us as soon as reasonably possible.

8. Pools and spas
   a. If you have a pool or spa which discharges water at more than 0.5 litres per second when it is emptied or the filter is backwashed (see your Owner’s Manual), you must limit the flow to the pump unit by installing:
      i. an intermediate holding tank
      ii. an additional pump, or
      iii. a flow limiting valve.
   The installation must be done by a licensed plumber.
   b. You must meet the cost of purchasing, installing and maintaining the holding tank, additional pump or flow limiting valve, including any work (installation or maintenance) performed by a licensed plumber.
   c. If your pool or spa discharges water at more than 0.5 litres per second we may refuse to accept the waste and you may be directed to find an alternative way of disposing with this additional waste.

9. Trade Waste Customers
   Trade waste is any liquid waste that is generally generated by industrial and commercial business activities. All trade waste customers must:
   a. have a trade waste consent or trade waste agreement with us prior to the discharge of trade waste
   b. meet the cost of purchasing, installing and maintaining any flow limiting valve, or additional pump including any work (installation or maintenance) performed by a licensed plumber
   c. comply with the terms of any trade waste consent or agreement in addition to these terms and conditions.

10. Restricting water use
    Whenever you discover anything wrong with the pump unit (including a power failure) or your property drain, you must restrict the amount of water discharged to your property drain.
    This will reduce the amount of wastewater generated from your property while the fault persists and will help to avoid any overflows from the pump unit.

11. Pressure sewer system manual
    You must ensure that a copy of Your Pressure Sewer System Home Owner’s Manual is kept at the property at all times, even if the property is leased or rented.
    Copies of the manual are available from our website.

12. Decommissioning existing systems
    When your house is connected to the pressure sewer system, you must arrange for a licensed plumber to decommission your existing wastewater treatment system (septic tank), in accordance with EPA Victoria requirements. You must pay for this work.

13. Selling your property
    When we provide an Information Statement about your property (for example, to a potential purchaser), it will state that the property is in a pressure sewer area and that special connection conditions apply to it.

14. Costs and charges
    a. If your property is part of the Mt Macedon sewerage scheme, once a connection point to your property is provided, you must pay the one-off $800.00 sewer contribution fee or commence four monthly instalments of $26.66 payable over twenty years (60 instalments totalling $1,600.00).
    b. If you are not included in the scheme, you must pay the full cost associated with connection to the pressure sewer system, subject to capacity and availability or augmentations.
    c. You must also meet the annual sewerage service charges which apply to all residential or business properties.

For more information call 1300 650 422 or visit us at westernwater.com.au