

Leaks: spot them early

The 60 flats share one communal water supply, paid for through the service charge, so water leaking away in any flat is paid for by every flat (the commercial units have their own supplies). Our communal water use has more than doubled recently, so we're asking every household to check three things: toilets, washing machines and dishwashers, and the hot water cylinder. Leaks also travel, damaging the flats below.

IF YOU HAVE A LEAK RIGHT NOW

1. **Turn off your water at the stopcock**, behind the ceiling access panel just outside your front door. It opens with a square tee key, cheap from any DIY shop.
2. **If water is near electrics, switch off the power** at the consumer unit (fuse box) in your airing cupboard, if you can reach it safely; if the leak is from the cylinder, switch off the immersion heater too. Keep away from any sagging ceiling.
3. **Tell your neighbours below.**
4. **Report it to Ringley:** 0330 174 7747 (Monday to Friday) or joe.bartlett@ringley.co.uk; out of hours 0207 428 2056. Call 999 only if someone is hurt or in immediate danger, or there's sparking, smoke or a burning smell.

TOILETS: THE BIGGEST WATER WASTER

A cistern that keeps refilling because water is trickling into the bowl is one of the biggest wasters of water there is: fixing one can save 200 to 400 litres a day. **The paper test** (from [Waterwise](#)): put a square of toilet paper at the back of the bowl and leave it overnight without flushing. Wet in the morning means a leak. Also listen for a cistern refilling when nobody has flushed.

WASHING MACHINES AND DISHWASHERS: THE MOST DISRUPTIVE LEAKS

Their leaks go straight through the floor to the flat below, so they cause the most damage and disruption to neighbours. Check the hoses and their connections now and then for bulges, cracks or damp, and replace them at the first sign of wear. Where you can, run them while you're home and awake; if you run them overnight on a cheaper off-peak or smart tariff, a water leak alarm on the floor behind the machine is an inexpensive safeguard, as it sounds whatever the source of the leak. Know the isolation valve on the pipe behind each machine, where a quarter turn shuts off its water, and turn it off when you go away.

CHECK YOUR HOT WATER CYLINDER

Every flat has a Megaflo hot water cylinder, most original to the building from around 2004, holding 210 litres and heated by electric immersion heaters. It runs at mains pressure, so it has a pressure relief valve that releases water if the pressure or temperature gets too high. That water drains through the **tundish**: a small fitting with open sides on the pipe below the cylinder, designed so you can see water passing through it (diagram overleaf).

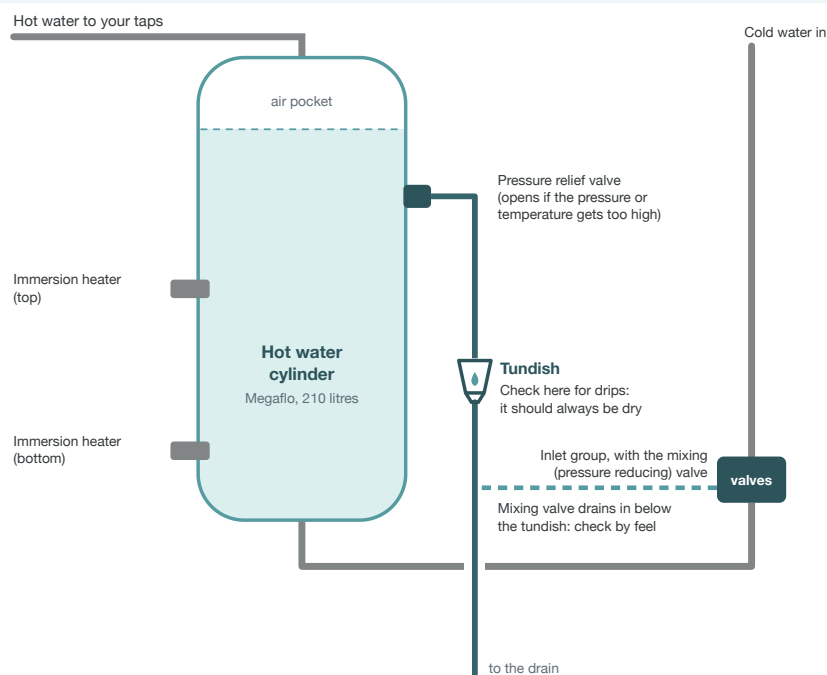
Check once a month, in two steps. First, look into the tundish: it should be completely dry. Hold a folded square of dry kitchen paper in the opening for a few minutes, ideally while the water is heating; if it comes out damp, water is escaping. Take the paper out afterwards, and never leave anything in the tundish or block it: it's a safety outlet.

Second, feel the pipe below the tundish. The mixing (pressure reducing) valve drains into it below the tundish, so a fault there never shows on the paper. A cold pipe when no water is being used, often with

the sound of running water, means water is running away through it.

What you notice	Likely cause and what to do
Drips at the tundish while the water heats	The pressure relief valve opening as the water expands, usually because the cylinder's internal air pocket has run low; the water may feel warm. Book a service to have the air pocket recharged.
A steady trickle at the tundish, even when not heating	The pressure relief valve no longer sealing. Book an engineer soon: it runs day and night.
Hot water at the tundish, or a hot pipe	The pressure relief valve has opened because the water is overheating, often because a thermostat has failed. Switch off the immersion heater now and call an engineer urgently.
A dry tundish, but a cold pipe below it	Water running away through the mixing (pressure reducing) valve, which drains in below the tundish. You may hear water running constantly. Book an engineer.

Have your cylinder serviced every year. The engineer checks the valves and thermostats and recharges the air pocket. Make sure they're qualified to work on unvented cylinders (often called G3 qualified), and please don't attempt valve repairs yourself. Owners arrange the service; if you rent, ask your landlord.



The pressure relief valve drains through the tundish, where escaping water can be seen; the mixing valve drains into the pipe below it, so check that pipe by feel.

OTHER CAUSES WORTH CHECKING

- **Baths and showers.** Cracked or missing sealant lets water through to the flat below; reseal when it looks tired.
- **Taps.** Fix drips promptly; on a shared supply they add up.

WHO'S RESPONSIBLE

Under the lease, each owner keeps their own flat's pipes, cylinder and appliances in good repair, and where an unmaintained installation causes damage, the costs can be recharged to the owner responsible. If you rent, tell your landlord and Ringley about any leak straight away. Leaks in communal areas go to Ringley.