



Water charges – who pays?

When is a tenant responsible for water charges?

A tenant is responsible for water charges if:

1. The premises have a separate water meter; and
2. The written tenancy agreement states that the tenant shall pay for metered water; and
3. The water supplier charges for water provided to the premises on a metered basis.

All three of the above conditions must be met for the tenant to be charged for water provided to the tenancy.

A tenant won't be responsible for water charges if the tenant agrees with the landlord in writing that the landlord will pay them, or if there is no reference to payment of water charges in the tenancy agreement.

Water suppliers around the country charge for water in several different ways. For more specific information about water charges in your area, contact 0800 TENANCY.

Responsibility for a water supply

Landlords are responsible for ensuring an adequate supply of water to their rental properties (Housing Improvement Regulations 1947).

If a water supplier contracts with a landlord, and the landlord passes the obligation to pay water charges onto the tenant, the tenant is obliged to pay the water charges. If the tenant pays the charges but the landlord does not pay the water supplier and the water is then disconnected, the landlord may be held responsible to pay for the reconnection of the water supply.

Any tenant who fails to pay the necessary water charges may be in breach of their tenancy agreement and the landlord can issue a letter giving them 10 working days to remedy the breach. Refusal to remedy a breach of a tenancy agreement can result in a Tenancy Tribunal application.

Tank water – not metered

If the water supply is from a tank, the landlord should provide a full tank at the start of a tenancy and refill as needed. In most cases the landlord must pay for the cost of refilling water tanks. Most tanks do not have water meters and don't meet the criteria for charging for water as above.

Water tanks should be an appropriate size. For example, an average-sized house should have a tank of about 5000 gallons (22,500 litres), which should be properly connected by a guttering system to a roof of reasonable size so it can be topped up from time to time by rainwater. There should be no leaks or contamination.



The pump is an essential part of a tank water system. As long as the pump faces only normal wear and tear, the landlord is responsible for its maintenance. If tenants damage the pump, for example by letting it run when the tank is empty, they may be held responsible for this.

It would be a useful precaution for the landlord to provide written instructions and explain how the water system works.

Where can I go for more information?

Visit the Department's website www.dbh.govt.nz or call 0800 TENANCY (0800 83 62 62) if you have additional questions.