

TAPPED IN

Bringing you news, updates and information from Watercare



Watercare network engineer Alex Talakai Puloka realigns the joints on one of the pipes tucked under the Auckland Harbour Bridge to stop it from leaking.

Help us to find the leaks

While we didn't receive much rainfall over summer, Aucklanders kept their water use well under control. In fact, people used a lot less in February this year than in February 2020 – keep up the good work, everyone!

As we head into the autumn months, our water supply is looking stable. This means our water storage dams are in a good position and we have sufficient water to get us through until the winter rain arrives. The long term is looking good also, as our application to draw more water from the Waikato River was approved. This means we will be able to draw up to 300 million litres of water a day from the river year-round, once the consent is active.

That doesn't mean we can start wasting water, though. The recent dry spell meant there were numerous leaks within our public network. This can happen when dry conditions cause the soil surrounding the pipes to shrink. The soil pulls away from the pipes, creating pressure that can lead to cracking. Our team is working hard to stay on top of fixing these leaks when they occur.

There is also potential to find and fix leaks at home to help reduce water wastage. In this edition of *Tapped In*, you can learn how to spot leaks on your property and sign up for a free EcoMatters water check. You can also find out more about what we're doing to fix leaks of all sizes in Auckland. Also, take a sneak peek behind the scenes with our profile on Sifa Pole, Watercare engineer.

DID YOU KNOW?

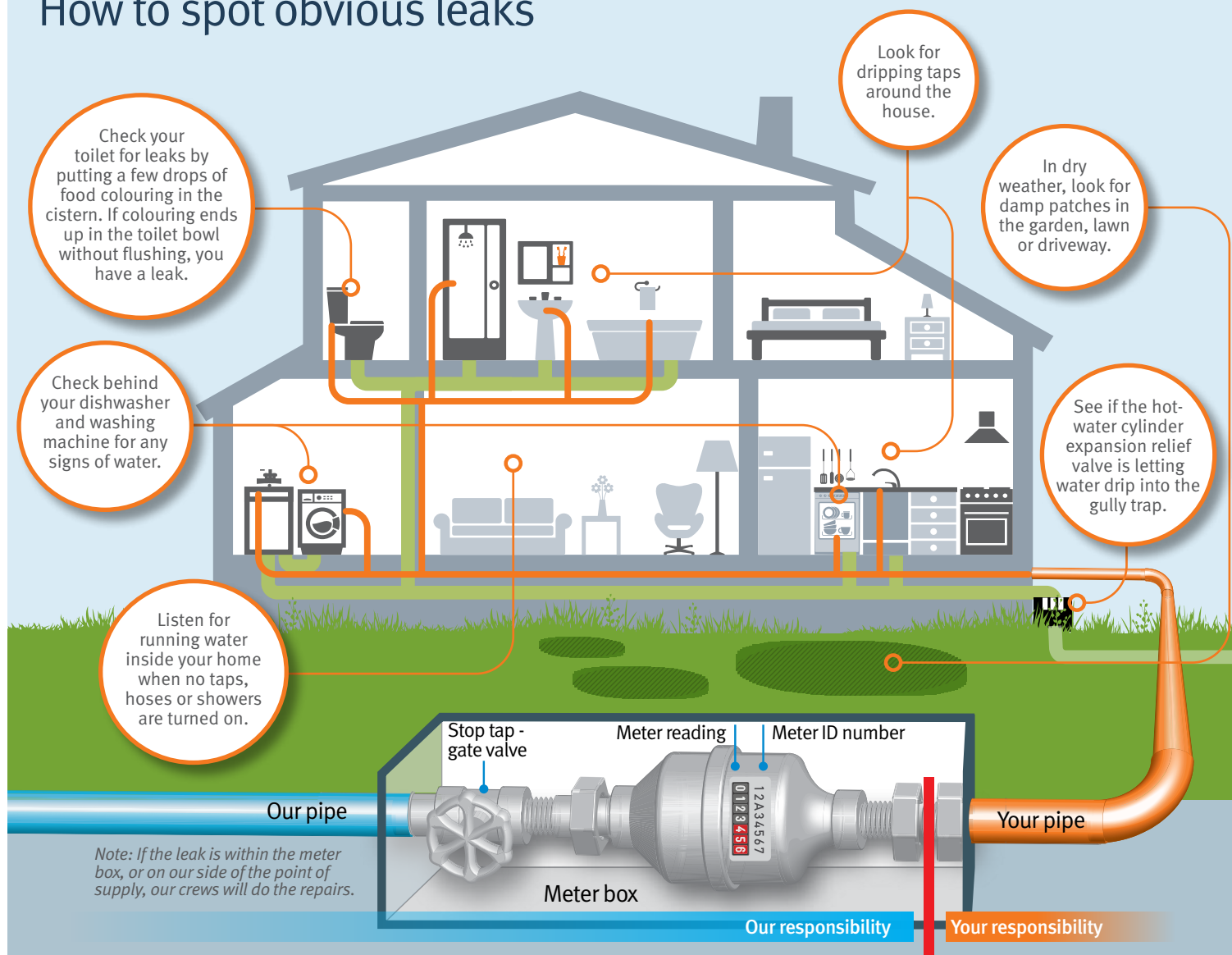
The laundry and shower combined is approximately **half the water usage** in a household – you can make the biggest savings by making changes in these areas.



How you can detect leaks at home

A leak on your property can waste thousands of litres of water. If we notice a big jump in your water usage, we will send you a letter or leave a high water-use notice in your mailbox with information on what to do next. However, it is also possible that you may have a slow leak that has not been detected by us as high usage. There are steps you can follow to identify whether there is a leak – big or small – on your property.

How to spot obvious leaks



How to spot hidden leaks

A simple leak test can help you identify hidden leaks on your property. Pick a time when no water is being used on your property, then find your water meter and read the numbers. After two hours, read your water meter again then compare the two readings. If the numbers are different, you have a water leak. You may need to call a registered plumber to check further.

Visit watercare.co.nz and search for 'check for a leak' for more information.



Choosing a certified plumber

At home, you can fix dripping taps and replace the ball valves in toilet cisterns yourself. You can also replace old dishwashers and washing machines.

However, for more complicated jobs, please use a plumber who has an NZ Practising Licence.

Find out more at www.pgdb.co.nz.

How we detect and fix leaks in our networks

Whether we're scaling the underbelly of one of the country's most well-known landmarks to fix a water leak or sweeping the streets to find invisible leaks, our team is working hard to reduce water loss across Auckland.

Keeping the water flowing under the bridge

Our team recently completed a complex repair job on one of the two key water pipes tucked under the Auckland Harbour Bridge. This job, which required realigning the joints on one of the pipes to stop it from leaking, was complex not only due to the tricky location but also, because of its significance to Auckland's water network.

People on most of Auckland's lower North Shore normally receive their drinking water from two major pipes, each just over half a metre in diameter. These pipes begin in central Auckland where they connect to giant reservoirs and then make their way to the North Shore via the Harbour Bridge. Thankfully, when the crew received the leak notification, they were able to respond quickly so no one went thirsty. Everyone, from engineers to network planners, maintenance operators, infrastructure partners and external contractors, worked together in harmony to get the job done. All of the intense planning boiled down to a few hours of work in windy conditions suspended on scaffolding and a narrow path underneath the traffic lanes.

The skilled planning and precision on the day is a reminder of the resilience in our water network. The network of pipes that run under our feet are stress-tested to cope when repairs arise, which they inevitably will. We plan for these types of situations and we have a responsibility to our customers to do everything we can to maintain the network efficiently.

Visit waterforlife.org.nz for more information.



Sweeping the streets for leaks

We are continuing to work on reducing water loss through early detection and fixing of leaks. When we find these invisible leaks in our network, we repair them and prevent the associated water loss. By repairing these smaller leaks which are normally invisible on the surface, we prevent larger leaks that can occur when the ground dries up and contracts, causing pipe movement and sometimes breakages. In the past 12 months, we have:

- Swept 6000 kilometres of water pipes out of a planned 6000 kilometres, proactively checking for leaks
- Found and repaired 2681 leaks
- Replaced 15,992 domestic water meters as part of a planned replacement programme, to ensure accurate meter readings of consumption
- Installed about 1670 smart meters for commercial customers, to provide real-time information on water consumption and leaks.

Want to
take your
water-saving
efforts to the
next level?



Sign up for a free water check.

We've partnered with EcoMatters to offer free in-home visits to help you reduce your water use.

As part of these water checks, one of EcoMatters' friendly sustainability advisors visits your home to investigate all things water related.

During the water check, which will take about an hour, we will check everything from your kitchen and bathroom flow rates to showing you how to read your water meter. You will receive personalised water-saving advice for each area of your home, flow-rate checks for showers and mixer taps, and free water saving-products and installations (where required).

To sign up for a free water check, visit www.ecomatters.org.nz/saving-water.

Working with Fire and Emergency to save millions of litres of water

We're partnering with Fire and Emergency crews to save millions of litres of water by using adapted skips when carrying out pump training.

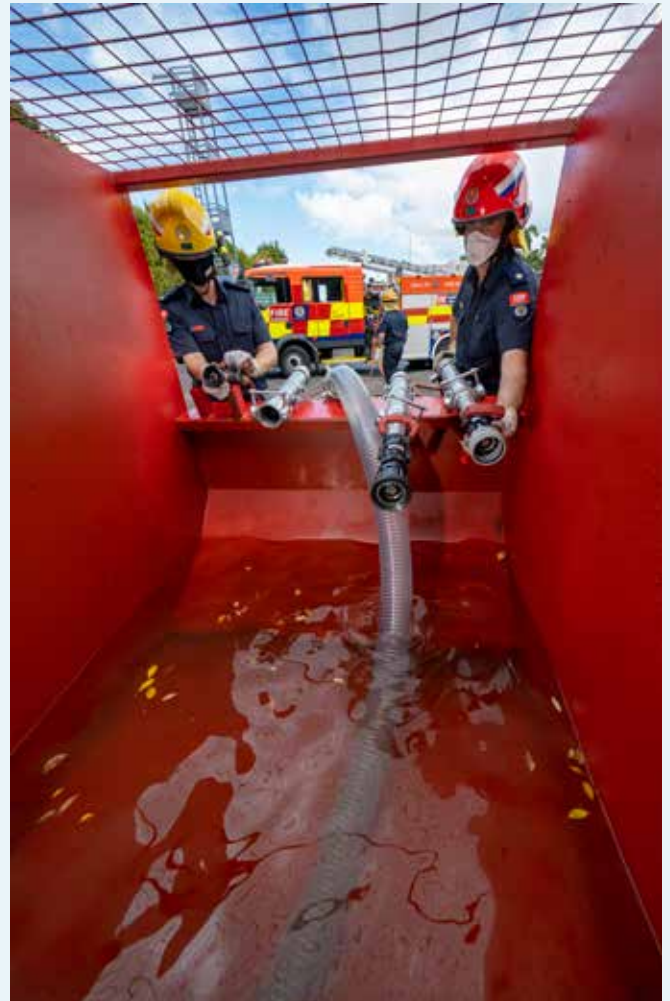
Most firefighters need about 20 hours to prepare themselves for their pump training course, and over that period they could use up to 2.8 million litres of water. By using the skip bin modified into a Pump Training Module unit, the amount of water saved by each firefighter is equivalent to the water needs of about 17,000 people for one day.

The Pump Training Module unit is filled with water, and then pumped out using a small portable pump to simulate a hydrant. That supplies water to the large pump, and when a firefighter is training with it, the water is squirted back into the skip.

Five units will be strategically placed at Fire and Emergency sites around Auckland. The first two units have been delivered at the Māngere station and the Mt Wellington Regional Training Centre, while the next three will be heading to Silverdale, Papakura and Glen Eden.

Fire and Emergency were supportive of our water-saving efforts while we recovered from the drought – even moving the training outside of Auckland. We will continue to work closely with them to not only grow the number of Pump Training Module units but also explore other ways of achieving even greater savings.

We are already looking at a firefighting simulator that uses virtual reality to provide realistic training scenarios without the use of any water. This will be piloted during 2022.



A day in the life of Sifa Pole



Watercare engineer Sifa Pole is responsible for delivering safe drinking water and wastewater services to southern Auckland – a role that's a bit like conducting an orchestra.

In Sifa's role you could say he is a bit of a conductor: leading an orchestra where the instruments are pipes and manholes and pump stations and reservoirs. When the networks of water and wastewater flows, all of these different instruments work in harmony; but more often than not, something is out of tune, a pipe leaks or a pump station needs upgrading.

It's his job to continuously fine-tune everything so the orchestra can keep playing. He directs what maintenance happens and where – when a piece of equipment needs upgrading, or where to spend the precious capital resource that we have for the city.



Scan the QR code to read the full article and watch a short video of Sifa in action.

KEEP IN TOUCH

Tapped In is your newsletter. If you would like to talk to us about any stories from this edition or your ideas for future issues, we'd love to hear from you. To get in touch, please email our communications team at communications@water.co.nz. You can learn more about what we do at waterforlife.org.nz