Water and wastewater charges

Find out who is responsible for paying water and wastewater charges.

Landlords must make sure enough water is available at their rental properties. If there is no piped water supply, the landlord must make sure enough water can be collected and stored.

If the property is part of a unit title complex, the body corporate rules form part of the tenancy agreement. Landlords should tell tenants if the rules regulate water supply among the units.

Body corporate rules [https://www.unittitles.govt.nz/body-corporate-how-it-works.setting-the-operational-rules/]

Who pays for water charges

A metered water supply allows a water supplier to charge for the amount of water used. The tenant pays for any water charges if:

- the property has a separate water meter
- the water supplier provides water on a metered basis
- the charges can be exclusively attributed to the tenants use of the property.

Otherwise the landlord pays for the water charges.

Who pays for wastewater charges

Water suppliers charge for wastewater in different ways, which varies around the country.

Landlords are usually responsible for fixed wastewater charges. The supplier charges these whether or not the property is occupied.

Some suppliers calculate wastewater based on how much water they supply. The landlord can ask the tenant to pay for the wastewater they produce.

How to pay

The landlord must pay the whole water account and then ask the tenant to reimburse them.

The water account can’t be in the tenant’s name. Some water companies will provide a copy of the account to the tenant with the landlord’s permission.

If water charges aren’t paid

If the water is disconnected because the landlord hasn’t paid, the landlord is responsible for reconnection.

If the tenant doesn’t pay, they are in breach of their tenancy agreement. The landlord can issue a notice to remedy to give the tenant a set amount of time to pay. If they still don’t pay, the landlord can apply to the Tenancy Tribunal to get it sorted.

Tank water

If the water supply is from a tank, the landlord should provide a full tank at the start of a tenancy. The tenancy agreement should record that the tenant will arrange and pay for any refills.

Water tanks need to:

- be an appropriate size. An average-sized house should have a tank of about 5000 gallons (22,500 litres)
- be properly connected to a roof of reasonable size so rainwater can top up the tank
- have no leaks or contamination.

General maintenance of the pump is the landlord’s responsibility. If tenants damage the pump, (eg, by letting the pump run when the tank is empty) they may be responsible for the cost of repairs. The landlord should provide written instructions on how the tank water system works.