

WATRS

Water Redress Scheme

ADJUDICATOR'S DECISION SUMMARY

Adjudication Reference: WAT/ /0832

Date of Decision: 7 November 2018

Complaint

The customer submits that he has been experiencing high water pressure at his property since works were carried out by the company on a nearby water main. The issue has resulted in damage to fittings in his property. He is also unable to use appliances. The customer requests that the company install a Pressure Regulating Value (PRV). The customer also requests £58.99 for the supply and fitting of a new bathroom tap unit; a sum to be confirmed for water damage to kitchen units – replacement of units and labour costs; £1,170.00 for using a laundrette every week at £15.00 per week for 78 weeks; and £2,500.00 for compensation for inconvenience.

Defence

The company submits that it has not increased the water pressure at the customer's property, and has not carried out any work that could have affected the water pressure at the customer's property. There are two water mains that run along the customer's road, a 125mm main which was installed in March 2016 and another 14" main. The customer is connected to the 14" main. No work has been carried out on the 14" main. It carried out some water mains flushing in the area in May 2017. Water mains flushing does not cause high water pressure and the customer's property was not one of those directly affected by the works. The water pressure being received at the customer's property is 7 bar. Pressure has remained constant at this level since at least May 2014, which is prior to any work it carried out. There is no upper limit for water pressure, but most good quality water fittings should be able to withstand pressure up to 10 bar. If the water pressure at a property does not exceeds 10 bar, it will not install a PRV, although the customer has the option to arrange this himself. No offer of settlement was made.

Findings

There is no evidence to show that works undertaken by the company in the area in March 2016 and May 2017 affected the customer's property. The data from 28 May 2014 to 27 March 2018 from the company's pressure logger shows that the pressure of water supplied to the customer was constant at 7 bar, both before and after any work it carried out in the area. I acknowledge the customer's claim and I can appreciate the customer's distress at the damage he describes as having occurred at his property. However, having carefully considered the matter, there is no evidence to show that the problems complained of are the fault of the company's and/or that the company is liable

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to meet the cost of installing a PRV; rectifying damage; or paying compensation for distress and inconvenience.

Outcome

The company does not need to take any further action.

The customer must reply by 5 December 2018 to accept or reject this decision.

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Party Details

Customer: []

Company: [].

Case Outline

The customer's complaint is that:

- He has been experiencing high water pressure at his property since works carried out by the company on a nearby water main. He has been in contact with the company numerous times over a considerable period of time but the company has still failed to resolve the problem.
- The issue has resulted in damage to his kitchen units and has forced him to isolate the water supply to his dishwasher and washing machine. Earlier in the year, the problem also caused the pipework in his bathroom sink to fail, causing a leak. A plumber had to be called to replace the entire tap unit. On 4 November 2017, he had to isolate the water supply to his bathroom sink as water was forcing its way out of the top of the tap unit resulting in another flood in the bathroom and damage to his wireless router which was also affected as a result of water dripping through the ceiling. Domestic chores such as washing clothes, dishes and washing in the bathroom sink are all impossible at present.
- The customer requests that the company install a Pressure Regulating Valve (PRV). The customer also requests £58.99 for the supply and fitting of a new bathroom tap unit; a sum to be confirmed for water damage to kitchen units – replacement of units and labour costs; £1,170.00 for using a laundrette every week at £15.00 per week for 78 weeks; and £2,500.00 for compensation for inconvenience.

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The company's response is that:

- It has not increased the water pressure at the customer's property, and has not carried out any work that could have affected the water pressure.
- In March 2016, it completed work to replace a 4" cast iron water main in Oak Way with a 125mm PE water main. The customer reported that he believed the water pressure at his property had increased as a result of this work and this was causing damage to his internal fittings. There are two water mains that run along Oak Way– the 125mm PE main that was installed in March 2016 and another 14" CI main. After carrying out some investigations, it identified that the customer is connected to the 14" water main. It has not carried out any work on this particular water main. In addition, the water mains renewal work was completed in March 2016, and the customer had only reported the issue in May 2017. It is unlikely that the mains renewal work was the cause.
- In addition to the water mains renewal work, it carried out some water mains flushing in May 2017. The customer received warning of this work. Several thousand customers received warning of this work. The customer's property was not one of those directly affected. Water mains flushing involves turning on a fire hydrant and leaving it running until the water runs clear. The effects of water mains flushing are low water pressure while the hydrant is running, and discolouration of the water supply. Water mains flushing does not cause high water pressure. Once the water main had been flushed through, the hydrant was turned off and the water supply network returned to normal.
- The water pressure being received at the customer's property is 7 bar. According to a permanent pressure logger on the 14" main which supplies the customer's property, the pressure has remained constant at this level since at least May 2014, which is prior to any work it carried out.
- A number of the customer's neighbours are connected to the same water main, so are receiving the same level of water pressure. It has not received any complaints of high water pressure or reports of damage to internal plumbing fittings from any other customers in the area.
- Whilst on site in August 2017, some residents confirmed that they had experienced noisy pipes intermittently for several years. In order to resolve this problem, one of the residents, who owned two properties in Oak Way, had taken the decision some years earlier to transfer the water services to the lower pressure water main on the other side of the road.
- There is no upper limit for water pressure, but most good quality water fittings should be able to withstand pressure up to 10 bar. If a customer is receiving 10 bar of water pressure or above, this can potentially cause problems with internal fittings.

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- If the water pressure at a property exceeds 10 bar, it will install a PRV on the private water supply pipe. As the water pressure at the customer's property does not exceed 10 bar, it will not install a PRV, although the customer has the option to arrange this himself.

How is a WATRS decision reached?

In reaching my decision, I have considered two key issues. These are:

1. Whether the company failed to provide its services to the customer to the standard to be reasonably expected by the average person.
2. Whether or not the customer has suffered any financial loss or other disadvantage as a result of a failing by the company.

In order for the customer's claim against the company to succeed, the evidence available to the adjudicator must show on a balance of probabilities that the company has failed to provide its services to the standard one would reasonably expect and that as a result of this failure the customer has suffered some loss or detriment. If no such failure or loss is shown, the company will not be liable.

I have carefully considered all of the evidence provided. If I have not referred to a particular document or matter specifically, this does not mean that I have not considered it in reaching my decision.

How was this decision reached?

1. The company has submitted evidence to support its submission that the customer's property is connected to the 14" water main in Hardy Barn, and not the smaller 125mm water main. There is no evidence to show that the company undertook any work on the 14" water main in March 2016.
2. In light of the company's submissions about the water mains flushing process, I also accept, on a balance of probability, the company's submissions that the water mains flushing it undertook in May 2017 in the District Metered Area in which the customer's property is located would not have resulted in high water pressure at the customer's property.

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3. I am also particularly mindful of the data from 28 May 2014 to 27 March 2018 for the pressure logger on the 14" main which supplies the customer's property, submitted by the company in evidence. The data shows that the pressure of water supplied to the customer was constant at 7 bar, both before and after any work it carried out in the area.
4. In addition, the company states that only if the water pressure at a property exceeds 10 bar, will it install a PRV on a private water supply pipe. Under Ofwat guidelines, companies must maintain a minimum pressure of water in the communication pipe serving the premises supplied with water of 0.7 bar. I accept the company's submission that there is no maximum limit for water pressure. It therefore falls outside my remit to direct that the company fit a PRV at its costs at the customer's property.
5. Further, the company states that it has not received any complaints of high water pressure or reports of damage to internal plumbing fittings from any other customers in the area. For the avoidance of doubt, I note that the company also submits that one of the customer's neighbours, who owns two properties in Oak Way, had taken the decision a few years to transfer the water services to the lower pressure water main on the other side of the road. However, I note that this was due to intermittent noisy pipes, and importantly, there is also no evidence to show that the company undertook this work for the customer's neighbour or paid for this work to be undertaken.
6. I acknowledge the customer's claim and I can appreciate the customer's distress at the damage he describes as having occurred at his property. However, having carefully considered the matter, there is no evidence to show that the problems complained of are the fault of the company's and/or that the company is liable to meet the cost of installing a PRV, rectifying damage or paying compensation for distress and inconvenience.
7. Consequently, in view of all of the above, the customer's claim is unable to succeed.

Outcome

The company does not need to take any further action.

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What happens next?

- This adjudication decision is final and cannot be appealed or amended.
 - The customer must reply by 5 December 2018 to accept or reject this decision.
 - When you tell WATRS that you accept or reject the decision, the company will be notified of this. The case will then be closed.
 - If you do not tell WATRS that you accept or reject the decision, this will be taken to be a rejection of the decision.
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**U Obi LLB (Hons) MCI Arb
Adjudicator**

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