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Thames Water told to pay out correct compensation to 'Beast from the East' victims



Thames Water staff load free bottles of emergency water into a customer's car on March 5, 2018 in London CREDIT: LEON NEAL/GETTY IMAGES

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A Government minister has urged Thames Water to pay out the correct compensation to customers who went days without water in the aftermath of the Beast From the East.

Many have complained they have only received £30 after going more than 48 hours without water last month, instead of the promised £150, and a London MP has accused the company of having a "Victorian system".

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She told The Sunday Telegraph: "The tens of thousands of people across southern England who lost their water supply following the big freeze last month must be properly compensated.

"We are pleased Thames Water has agreed to go beyond the statutory minimum and pay those customers' worst affected up to £150.

"Michael Gove and I are due to meet Thames Water next week and will raise this issue directly to make sure they honour that commitment."

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan, MP for Tooting, South London, last week criticised the company for offering wrong compensation to her constituents, thousands of whom went up to a week without water.

She said: "Thames Water have inaccurate data meaning many local residents have been offered the wrong amount of compensation.

"Thames Water have agreed to send cheques to every household affected, their system spans back to the Victorian Era so it's likely that some of their data is out of date."

Many said they had received the wrong compensation. Twitter user Emma C asked Dr Allin-Khan: "We've been sent a letter offering us £30.

"We're without water for well over 48 hours so should we dispute it and insist on the £150 they agreed with you?"

Another said: "I have been offered £50 and phoned @thameswater and asked them what was basis of their calculations. They never responded. I had no water from Sat night to Tues eve as my Tweets will attest to."

Some said they were being "ignored" by the company, with one Twitter user writing: "we haven't been offered any compensation and any tweets that I have sent to TW have just been ignored."

Another customer tweeted: "No correspondence or cheques from @thameswater received in my household so far."

The company told The Telegraph it had written to every customer affected so far, and that it was making every effort to get the correct money to households.

Thames Water chief executive Steve Robertson said: "I would like to personally apologise to all our customers across the region who experienced interruptions to their water supply following the freezing weather and rapid thaw in early March.

"Whilst we make extensive preparations for winter, this incident was unprecedented in terms of scale and technically complex to resolve. Our teams worked round the clock to restore supply however, we recognise we failed to protect our customers from the impact."

A spokesman for the regulator Ofwat said it was examining "the adequacy of the compensation that companies are offering affected customers". The review concludes on June 15.

At the time of the thaw in early March, Thames Water said around 20,000 homes were left with no running water, while several water companies said they were tackling multiple bursts on their networks.