

A Guide to WRAS and KIWA: Understanding UK Water Product Compliance.

When specifying, installing or purchasing products that connect to the public water supply in the UK, you will frequently encounter the names WRAS and KIWA. Both are crucial to ensuring water safety and regulatory compliance but they operate in different ways.

This guide explains the roles of each organisation, what their approvals cover and the key distinctions between them.

The Role of WRAS (Water Regulations Advisory Scheme)

What is WRAS?

WRAS is not a regulatory body itself but an advisory scheme owned by the 26 UK Water Suppliers. Its primary function is to promote and ensure compliance with the **Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999** in England and Wales, the **Water Byelaws 2014** in Scotland and the **Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009**.

The core mission of WRAS is to **protect public health** by preventing the contamination of public water supplies, ensuring no water is wasted, misused or unduly consumed.

What Does WRAS Cover?

WRAS provides two main services: **WRAS Product Approval** and **WRAS Material Approval**.



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The Role of WRAS



A) WRAS Product Approval

This is a way of demonstrating that a complete product is of a suitable quality and standard to avoid water contamination.

How it Works:

A manufacturer submits a product for testing to an independent, accredited laboratory. The laboratory tests the product against the requirements of **Regulation 4** of the Water Fittings Regulations.

The test results are then submitted to WRAS for assessment. If the product passes, it is granted "WRAS Approval" and listed in the WRAS Products & Materials Directory.

What it Certifies:

A WRAS Approved Product has been mechanically and materially tested to show it will not:

- Cause waste, misuse, undue consumption or contamination of the water supply.
- Degrade the quality of the water.

Examples of Products Covered:

Backflow prevention devices, large scale pipework, valves and fittings, commercial water heating and storage, water treatment and conditioning equipment, commercial processing equipment.

Important Limitation:

WRAS Approval is not a mark of a product's overall quality, performance or reliability. It only certifies that the product complies with the specific water safety regulations. Equipment could have a poor finish or a short lifespan but still be WRAS Approved.

B) WRAS Material Approval

This applies to non-metallic materials and components (like gaskets, linings/coatings hoses and tubing) that are in contact with drinking water.

- What it Certifies: The material has undergone testing to ensure it does not impart any odour, flavour or colour to the water, nor does it cause water cloudiness or promote the growth of micro-organisms.



The Role of KIWA

The Role of KIWA

What is KIWA?

Kiwa is a global **Testing, Inspection and Certification (TIC)** company. It is a commercial entity that operates across a vast range of sectors, including construction, energy, gas, agriculture and water.

In the context of UK water regulations, Kiwa acts as an accredited testing laboratory and an independent certification body. They are one of the organisations that can test products to the same standards required for WRAS Approval.

What Does KIWA Cover?

Kiwa offers its own certification scheme that is a direct alternative to WRAS Approval for demonstrating compliance with UK water regulations.

Kiwa KUKreg4 Certification

This is Kiwa's dedicated scheme for the UK market.

- **How it Works:** Similar to the WRAS process, a manufacturer submits a product to Kiwa. Their accredited laboratory then performs the necessary mechanical and water quality tests to ensure the product complies with Regulation 4 of the Water Fittings Regulations.
- **What it Certifies:** A product with KUKreg4 certification has demonstrated compliance with the same regulatory standards as a WRAS Approved product. It confirms the product is safe to be installed in a UK water system without causing contamination or waste.
- **Broader Scope:** As a TIC company, Kiwa can also offer combined testing for other standards (e.g., gas safety, electrical safety, European standards) at the same time, which can be more efficient for manufacturers.

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What this means for You.

The most common point of confusion is understanding how WRAS and Kiwa relate to each other. **While their goal in the water sector is the same (regulatory compliance), their nature and function are fundamentally different.**

Here is a summary table highlighting the key differences:

Feature	WRAS (Water Regulations Advisory Scheme)	KIWA
Nature of Organisation	A subscription scheme owned and funded by UK Water Suppliers.	A private, for-profit global Testing, Inspection, and Certification (TIC) company.
Primary Role	An administrator of an approval scheme . It assesses test reports and lists compliant products in its directory.	A testing and certification body . It performs the tests and issues its own certificates.
Scope	Focused solely on compliance with UK Water Fittings Regulations.	A global, multi-sector organisation covering water, gas, energy, construction and more.
The 'Certificate'	WRAS Approval . The product is listed in the WRAS online directory. This approval is valid for up to 5 years.	Kiwa KUKreg4 Certificate . The manufacturer receives a formal certificate and is listed on the Kiwa database.
The Relationship	WRAS does not perform tests. It relies on accredited test labs (which can include Kiwa) to test products, then assesses the results.	Kiwa is both the test lab and the certification body . It offers a "one-stop shop" for testing and certification.
Market Status	The historically established and widely recognised scheme in the UK water industry.	A recognised and equally valid alternative scheme for proving compliance with the same regulations.

How WRAS and KIWA Differ:

For anyone involved in specifying or installing a water fitting in the UK, the practical takeaway is this:

Both WRAS Approval and Kiwa KUKreg4 certification are accepted by all UK Water Suppliers as a "presumption of compliance" with the Water Fittings Regulations.

This means if a product has either a valid WRAS approval or a Kiwa KUKreg4 certificate, you can be confident it meets the legal requirements for installation.

While **WRAS** has greater historical brand recognition, Kiwa's scheme is an equally legitimate and robust method of demonstrating compliance.

The choice between them is often down to the manufacturer's preference for cost, service speed or the need for combined international testing.



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