



DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE

Drinking Water Inspectorate

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SOUTHERN WATER SERVICES LIMITED PLEAD GUILTY TO SUPPLYING WATER UNFIT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION

Southern Water Services Limited pleaded guilty on 9th August 2012 at West Hampshire Magistrate's Court to the supply of water unfit for human consumption.

The case related to an event in March 2011 where work on the distribution system in Chandlers Ford resulted in the supply of water with an objectionable appearance which consumers rejected.

The charge was brought under Section 70 of the Water Industry Act 1991 (as amended).

The Company was fined £ 12,015 and paid £ 14,483.08 towards prosecution costs.

In response, Professor Jeni Colbourne, Chief Inspector of Drinking Water, said: *"This case was brought because of deficiencies in the approach to remedying two leaking connections and subsequent management of the event. Southern Water did not act on its own risk assessment and this resulted in consumers receiving discoloured water. Communication with consumers were poor, and in addition, Southern Water did not carry out adequate investigations and took no samples following this event despite previous recommendations from the Inspectorate on this matter. I am pleased to note that the company has recognised the faults and is making the necessary improvements in the interests of consumers"*.

Notes to editors:

1. Section 70 of the Water Industry Act 1991 makes it criminal offence for a water company to supply water which is unfit for human consumption. The Drinking Water Inspectorate investigates all drinking water quality events across England and Wales. Prosecutions are taken forward where there is reliable evidence that an offence has been committed, where the company does not have a defence that it took all reasonable steps and exercised all due diligence, and when such a prosecution is regarded as being in the public interest.

2. Proceedings were taken forward in the name of the Chief Inspector of Drinking Water against Southern Water Services Limited for the alleged supply of water unfit for human consumption to the area of Chandlers Ford, Hampshire during March 2011. The event arose when Southern Water carried out planned work on the distribution system to remedy two leaking connections. A risk assessment for this work suggested a high risk that supplies would become discoloured and a plan of action was drawn up to prevent this. However, the plan was not followed in full resulting in the supply of potentially discoloured water to approximately 6,989 properties without warning. Despite inadequacies in the company's subsequent investigation of the event, the Inspectorate was able to act on the evidence provided by consumers as a number had found the appearance of the water so unpleasant that they rejected it for drinking and food preparation purposes.

3. The Drinking Water Inspectorate was set up in January 1990. Its main task is to check that water companies in England and Wales supply wholesome drinking water and in doing so comply with the requirements of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000 (as amended).

MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

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