



guardians of drinking water quality

DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE

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SEVERN TRENT WATER LIMITED PLEAD GUILTY TO MULTIPLE OFFENCES OF WATER SUPPLY

Severn Trent Water Limited pleaded guilty on 13 September 2012 at Chesterfield Magistrate's Court to charges brought in relation to three events affecting the Chesterfield area, Sandiacre in Nottingham and the Leicestershire and South Derbyshire area between December 2010 and September 2011.

Charges were brought by the Chief Inspector of Drinking Water under the Water Industry Act 1991 (as amended) and the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000 (as amended).

The Company was fined as follows:

Chesterfield: Fined £5,000 on each of six counts of water unfit for human consumption, fined £5,000 on one count a failure to disinfect water, fined £5,000 on one count of not subjecting water to sufficient preliminary treatment to prepare it for disinfection, fined £5,000 on one count of failure to design and continuously operate an adequate treatment process for the source and fined £5,000 on one count of failing to adhere to the national conditions of use for substances or products applied to or introduced to the water, total £50,000.

Sandiacre: Fined £4,000 on each of four counts of water unfit for human consumption, total £16,000.

Melbourne: Fined £5,000 on one count of a failure to disinfect water and £5,000 on one count of a failure to operate an adequate treatment process continuously, total £10,000.

Severn Trent was ordered to pay £37,990.10 towards prosecution costs and a victim surcharge.

In response, Professor Jeni Colbourne, Chief Inspector of Drinking Water, said: *"These charges were brought in relation to three events, two of which highlighted deficiencies in the design and operations of two treatment works and the third was due to work on the network that resulted in the delivery of water with an unacceptable appearance and odour to consumers. These charges reflect a very poor period of operational performance which the company has now recognised and is taking steps to prevent a recurrence."*

Notes to editors:

The Drinking Water Inspectorate

The Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) 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) and the Water Industry Act 1991 (as amended).

DWI investigates all drinking water quality events and 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.

Proceedings were taken forward in the name of the Chief Inspector of Drinking Water against Severn Trent Water for the charges as outlined above.

The nature of the events is outlined below.

Chesterfield event

Section 70 of the Water Industry Act 1991 (as amended) makes it criminal offence for a water company to supply water which is unfit for human consumption. Regulation 33 of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000 (as amended) makes it an offence to supply inadequately disinfected water, to fail to provide sufficient preliminary treatment to prepare it for disinfection, to fail to design and continuously operate an adequate treatment process for the source, and to fail to adhere to the national conditions of use for substances or products applied to or introduced to the water.

The prosecution follows an investigation by the Drinking Water Inspectorate of an event involving the supply of discoloured water to almost 470,000 consumers in the south, east and northeast Chesterfield and southwest Sheffield areas in August 2011. Severn Trent Water Ltd carried out planned work at Ogston water treatment works to remove the contents of a number of filters, prepare them for re-use and then reintroduce them to the site. However the company failed to follow the national conditions of use for the re-use of this type of filter material resulting in water which was discoloured being supplied. A number of consumers found the appearance of the water so unpleasant that they rejected it for drinking and food preparation purposes. The discoloured water also rendered inadequate, disinfection on the site.

Sandiacre event

Section 70 of the Water Industry Act 1991(as amended) makes it criminal offence for a water company to supply water which is unfit for human consumption.

The prosecution follows an investigation by DWI of an event involving the supply of discoloured water with a sulphurous taste and odour to consumers in the Sandiacre area of Nottinghamshire between 27 December and 30 December 2010. The water became contaminated during the repair of a burst main in Derby Road serving around 500 properties on 27 December 2010. Although the company received around 30 taste and odour complaints in a localised area supplied by the main, its investigation was unable to confirm the source of the contamination. During this event a number of consumers found the appearance of the water so unpleasant that they rejected it for drinking and food preparation purposes, and for bathing purposes, describing the water as being cloudy and smelling “eggy” or sewage-like.

Melbourne event

Regulation 33 of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000 (as amended) makes it an offence to supply inadequately disinfected water, to fail to design and continuously operate an adequate treatment process for the source.

The prosecution follows an investigation by DWI of an event involving the failure to adequately operate Melbourne water treatment works in the manner to which it was designed and for a short period resulted in inadequate disinfection of water during September 2011. Melbourne works supplies up to 440,000 consumers in the Leicestershire and South Derbyshire areas and a further 486,000 consumers receive water from the works blended with other sources. Severn Trent Water Ltd was carrying out routine maintenance work at the site, during which time issues occurred with equipment used in the disinfection treatment stage. This resulted in the temporary loss of disinfection at the works. During a company investigation of this occurrence a discovery was made of a closed valve associated with the treated water contact tank which had been inadvertently operated and had been closed between July 2010 and September 2011. This was contrary to the design and normal operation of this works and impacted the effective disinfection of the water. There are no indications that this has any impact on public health, however this event constituted a failure to meet the company’s own policy requirements, best practice and also failed to meet the requirements of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000 (as amended).

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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