



guardians of drinking water quality

DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE

Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

Enquiries: 030 0068 6400

DWI Website: <http://www.dwi.gov.uk>

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*******Press Release*******

Thames Water Utilities Ltd fined for drinking water offences

At Stratford Magistrates' Court today, Thames Water Utilities Ltd was fined £160,000 and additional costs of £79,839.68 were agreed. A victims' surcharge of £120.00 was applied.

The fine is in respect of three offences arising from two events in February and July 2017 when there were failures in the disinfection of drinking water at Coppermills Water Treatment Works situated in Walthamstow, London.

No consumers were harmed by either event.

The charges were brought by the Drinking Water Inspectorate under Regulation 26(1)(a), Regulation 26(1)(b), Regulation 26(4) and Regulation 33(1) of the Water Supply (Water quality) Regulations 2016.

In response, Marcus Rink, Chief Inspector of Drinking Water said '

'Whilst these events did not result in impact or harm to any consumers, Coppermills water treatment works suffered loss of control of key treatment processes on two occasions in 2017. Thames Water have experienced a number of similar incidents at other works which have led to repeated recommendations since 2014. Recommendations on training, procedures, maintenance must be acted upon to reduce current and future risks. It is undoubtedly in the public interest to bring this prosecution for a strategic works which contributes to the supply of over two million consumers in Greater London.'

Notes to editors :-

The Drinking Water Inspectorate checks that water companies in England and Wales supply drinking water that does not put consumers at risk, and that is wholesome and acceptable. The Inspectorate investigates all drinking water quality events in England and Wales and will bring prosecutions if it believes that it has reliable evidence that an offence was 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.

Regulation 26 provides for a number of offences relating to adequate treatment processes and disinfection.

Who was affected ?

No consumers were actually affected by these events but they were put at risk as disinfection of drinking water is a key public health measure. Coppermills Water Treatment Works is the sole supply to 728,000 consumers but contributes to 2 million consumers' water supplies across the London area.

What happened?

Water is required to be disinfected. At Coppermills Water Treatment Works, this is carried out by a number of treatment processes which include filtration of water through a sand bed and the controlled dosing of sodium hypochlorite (to disinfect) with electrically driven pumps. Adequate disinfection relies on the careful control of these processes and water needs to be of low turbidity for disinfection to be fully effective. In the first event, errors occurring in poorly planned electrical maintenance at the works led to the loss of control of the disinfection system and inadequately disinfected water entered supply. In the second event, disturbance in the flow of water across a sand filter raised turbidity (cloudiness) of the water and this affected the subsequent disinfection process.

The charges brought were :-

1. That on 16 February 2017, at Coppermills Water Treatment Works, Coppermill Lane, Walthamstow, E17 7HE, Thames Water Utilities Ltd failed to disinfect water that was supplied for such domestic purposes as consist in or include, cooking, drinking, food preparation and washing, contrary to Regulation 26(1)(a) and Regulation 33(1) of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2016;
2. That on 16 February 2017, at Coppermills Water Treatment Works, Coppermill Lane, Walthamstow, E17 7HE, Thames Water Utilities Ltd failed to design and continuously operate an adequate treatment process before supplying water for such domestic purposes as consist in or include, cooking, drinking, food preparation and washing, contrary to Regulation 26(4) and Regulation 33(1) of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2016;
3. That on 10 July 2017, at Coppermills Water Treatment Works, Coppermill Lane, Walthamstow, E17 7HE, Thames Water Utilities Ltd failed to subject water to sufficient preliminary treatment to prepare it for disinfection before supplying water for such domestic purposes as consist in or include, cooking, drinking, food preparation and washing, contrary to Regulation 26(1)(b) and Regulation 33(1) of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2016.