



guardians of drinking water quality

.4.1.1 DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE

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Information Letter 15/97

To: Board Level Contacts of Water and Sewerage Companies and Water Companies in England and Wales

Dear Sir/Madam

S19 Distribution System Undertakings : Customer Questionnaires for Assessing Discoloured Water Problems

1. Introduction

1.1. This letter provides guidance to companies on the conduct of customer questionnaires for assessing discoloured water problems as part of Pre- and Post-Renovation Assessment (PPRA) in connection with Section 19 distribution system Undertakings. The guidance has been prepared by a working group comprising representatives of the Water Services Association, the Water Companies' Association and the Drinking Water Inspectorate. The working group was advised by Market & Opinion Research International Ltd.

2. Definitions

2.1 Pre- and Post-Renovation Assessment (PPRA) is the process to be used by water companies when implementing the steps to be taken to comply with the requirements of Section 19 distribution system Undertakings for water quality driven renovation work to:

- establish that water quality before renovation is unsatisfactory and remedial work is required;
- establish that water quality after renovation is satisfactory; and
- compare water quality before and after renovation to demonstrate that the renovation has been effective.

2.3 Customer questionnaires used for PPRA are intended, in so far as is possible, to be an objective method of measurement reflecting customers' observations about water quality, in particular the occurrence

of discoloured water. Thus, they are quite different in purpose and design from surveys of general customer satisfaction.

- 2.3 The Inspectorate normally uses the term consumer to describe persons supplied with potable water by water undertakers, reflecting regulatory terminology and the broad spectrum of users to whom potable water is supplied. However, it has been agreed to use the term customer questionnaires for PPRA surveys reflecting current practice within water companies in the conduct of surveys. In the context of PPRA surveys, customer is defined as the most eligible respondent aged between 18 and 75 years (see Annex A).

3. Application

3.1 This guidance is to be used by those water companies that have opted to include customer questionnaires in their PPRA methods. It is expected that all water companies that have included such questionnaires in their renovation strategies will adopt the methodology set out in this Information Letter. Care has been taken in devising the model questionnaire to ensure that it can be used in conjunction with existing PPRA criteria; thus no modifications will be required to the PPRA criteria established by these companies.

4. Interpretation

- 4.1 The key questions in the questionnaire are Questions 1 and 2. In Question 1, each of the four columns should have one entry. An entry or entries in one or more of the columns for 'dirty', 'stained washing' or 'bits' for occurrences within the last year are to be taken as a single positive result. This result contributes to the percentage of customers interviewed reporting a discolouration problem. Entries for 'milky' water, and for occurrences over a year ago, 'no' or 'don't know' are not to be taken as a positive result. These customers are considered to have not experienced a relevant discolouration problem. PPRA criteria are then applied and the resulting assessment is reported as being either satisfactory or unsatisfactory to the Inspectorate.
- 4.2 Question 2 provides confirmation of the results of Question 1. Where the results are in conflict (e.g. if the reply to Question 1 includes two or more occurrences of dirty water in the past year, but the reply to Question 2 gives the last occurrence of dirty water as more than a year ago), the results from Question 2 should be used. Results from Question 2 may also be used if comparisons with results from other questionnaire methods are needed (see Appendix 2 to Annex A).
- 4.3 The Inspectorate would not normally expect results from Questions 3 onwards to be used in PPRA assessments. However, these data may be useful to a company in interpreting findings. In considering the results of PPRA from a company, the Inspectorate would be willing to consider the use

of these data in supporting exceptional cases where the company is able to demonstrate that a standard application of the customer questionnaire produces misleading results.

- 4.4 Information Letter 4/96 requires differences in results from PPRA sampling to be significant at the 90% level of confidence. This requirement includes customer questionnaire sampling. As a guide to choosing sample numbers, some values indicating the statistical reliability of various sample numbers are given in Appendix 1 to Annex A.

5. Attachments

The following attachments are made to this letter:

- Annex A "Notes for Managers, Supervisors, and Interviewers working on PPRA Customer Surveys", with two appendices, pp 5 - 13;
- Annex B Survey questionnaire, pp 14 - 18;
- Annex C Showcards, pp 19 - 22;
- Annex D Typical additional local instructions to interviewers pp 23 -24;
- Annex E Example of a completed questionnaire, pp 25 - 29.

6. Implementation and Timing

- 6.1 Where companies have specified in their strategy documents that they will use customer questionnaires as part of their methods for PPRA, it is expected that they will implement the methods in this Information Letter for all new assessments from 1 February 1998. Where other questionnaire methods have already been used for PreRenovation Assessment, the new methods or the existing methods may be used for the corresponding Post-Renovation Assessment for the zones or sub-zones concerned, at the discretion of the company. Appendix 2 of Annex A may help in comparing results from surveys using different questionnaires.
- 6.2 It is proposed that these methods be subject to a review after being in use for about a year.

7. Enquiries about this letter

- 7.1 Enquiries concerning this letter should be directed to Mr M J Purcell, Principal Inspector, (020 7944 5993), or Mr C Evins, (020 7944 5985), Floor 2/F4, 123 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6DE
- 7.2 Copies of this letter are being sent for information to the Secretaries of the Water Services Association and the Water Companies' Association; to the Director General of Water Services; to the Head of Water Supply and Regulation Division in the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions; and to the Head of Environment Division in the Welsh Office.

Please acknowledge receipt of this letter using the enclosed slip and envelope.

Yours faithfully,

M J Rouse
Chief Inspector