



guardians of drinking water quality

DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE

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13 November 1998

Information Letter 14/98

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

Dear Sir/Madam

Disinfection After Mains bursts and Repairs and Other Mains Activities

Purpose

1. The purpose of this letter is to replace DWI Information Letter 7/97 in view of the recent publication by the water industry of "Principles of Water Supply Hygiene and Technical Guidance Notes".

Background

2. On 11 April 1997, the Inspectorate issued DWI Information Letter 7/97 reminding water companies of the need to ensure adequate assessment of the potential risks to public health arising from the consequences of a breach of the integrity of a distribution mains - including burst mains, following relining of existing mains and introduction of replacement and new mains - before supplies to consumers are reinstated.
3. In that letter the Inspectorate stated that it regarded the guidance given in section 7, Distribution Systems, of "Operational Guidelines for the Protection of Drinking Water Supplies: Safeguards in the Operation and Management of Public Water Supplies in England and Wales" (Operational Guidelines) and Chapter 7 of "Guidance on Safeguarding the Quality of Public Supplies" (Guidance) as the accepted good practice. The Inspectorate noted that in June 1996 the water industry published "Principles of Water Supply Hygiene" (Principles) to replace the Operational Guidelines, but it could not accept the publication as an adequate replacement until the Principles were supported by expert guidance which water companies needed to develop their own internal procedures and codes.

Good Practice

4. The Inspectorate is pleased to note that the water industry has now published that expert guidance as Technical Guidance Notes (TGNs) with the Principles in "Principles of Water Supply Hygiene and Technical Guidance Notes" (Principles and TGNs). The Inspectorate regards the guidance given in these Principles and TGNs and in Chapter 7 of the Guidance as the basis for the establishment of accepted good practice by water companies with respect to their distribution system operations and activities.
5. The Inspectorate expects each water company to use the Principles and TGNs and Chapter 7 of the Guidance to develop its own operational procedures and codes for distribution system activities, appropriate to its local circumstances. The Inspectorate will check that each water company has such procedures in place during a future inspection.
6. If a water company has a drinking water quality incident involving a repaired main or other distribution system activity in which the Inspectorate judges that water unfit for human consumption has been supplied, the Inspectorate will take into account whether or not the water company has followed the Principles and TGNs, Chapter 7 of the Guidance and the company's own appropriate internal operating procedures in assessing whether the water company is likely to be able to mount a defence that it took all reasonable steps and acted with all due diligence to prevent the supply of water unfit for human consumption.
7. The Inspectorate also expects the water industry to review the Principles and TGNs from time to time in the light of experience. Any water company which identifies a matter that it considers needs to be reviewed should advise Water UK. Similarly the Inspectorate will advise Water UK if it identifies a matter for review from its inspection of water companies or its investigation of incidents affecting drinking water quality.

Enquiries

8. Any enquiries about this letter should be addressed to me or to Mike Waite, Principal Inspector, Zone 2/F4 (telephone 020 7944 5994).
9. Copies of this letter are being sent to Pamela Taylor, Chief Executive, Water UK; Andrew Wells, Water Supply and Regulation Division, Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions; Bob Macey, Environment Division, Welsh Office; Tim Hooton, Scottish Office Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries Department; Randal Scott, Drinking Water Inspectorate for Northern Ireland.
10. Please acknowledge receipt of this letter using the enclosed slip and envelope.

Yours sincerely

Owen Hydes
Deputy Chief Inspector