



guardians of drinking water quality

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Information Letter 16/2000

29 June 2000

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

Dear Sir or Madam

REVIEW OF PROCEDURES FOR OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE DISTRIBUTION NETWORK

Purpose

1. The purpose of this letter is to disseminate an overview of the findings of the technical audit of water companies' procedures for the operation and maintenance of the distribution network carried out in 1999.

Background

2. During 1999 the Inspectorate appointed Binnie, Black and Veatch, Consultants, to carry out a desktop audit of water companies' procedures for the operation and maintenance of distribution systems. The Consultants checked companies' procedures against ten checklists they had prepared and agreed with the Inspectorate covering key aspects of distribution system operation and maintenance. The Inspectorate has provided companies with final reports of their individual audits, drawing together the conclusions reached and recommendations and suggestions made. Companies were invited to provide a response to any recommendations made and these responses will be followed up as part of the Inspectorate's future company inspections.

The findings

3. The Consultants also produced an overview report which summarises the findings across all companies, broken down into the 10 different checklists used. A copy is attached to this letter. Individual company names have not been included in the summary to maintain anonymity.

4. Of particular note is that over 70% of companies had no formalised procedures for the avoidance of rapid fluctuations in flow that could disturb settlement, and were not employing computer modelling and other techniques to assess potential discolouration problems from pre-planned operations. Most companies however did have procedures covering: re-valving and/or re-zoning supplies; routine operation of valves; dealing with the discolouration of supplies; mains cleaning; systems for classifying recording and marking and monitoring valve status; and controlling and monitoring the use of fire hydrants by third parties.
5. It is expected that all companies will take time to review their own positions and make improvements to these procedures where necessary. In the event of the supply of water unfit for human consumption by a company, attributable to deficiencies in procedures for the operation and maintenance of distribution systems identified in this audit, it will not be able to rely on the defence of having taken all reasonable steps and exercised all due diligence

Enquiries

6. General enquiries on this letter should be addressed to Mike Waite, Principal Inspector, on 020 7944 5994.
7. Copies of this letter are being sent to Pamela Taylor, Chief Executive, Water UK; Bob Dinwiddy, Water Supply and Regulation Division, Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions; Bob Macey, Environment Division, The National Assembly for Wales; Tim Hooton, Water Services Unit, Scottish Executive; Randal Scott, Drinking Water Inspectorate for Northern Ireland; and Rowena Tye, Office of Water Services.
8. Please acknowledge receipt of this letter using the enclosed slip and envelope.

Yours faithfully

Michael Rouse

Chief Inspector
Drinking Water Inspectorate

The following documents are available in Adobe Acrobat format for downloading. The Adobe® Acrobat Reader® can be freely [downloaded](#).

- [Cover \(17kb Acrobat\)](#)
- [Index and Tables \(50kb Acrobat\)](#)
- [Checklist 1 \(19kb Acrobat\)](#)
- [Checklist 2 \(18kb Acrobat\)](#)

- [Checklist 3 \(15kb Acrobat\)](#)
- [Checklist 4 \(16kb Acrobat\)](#)
- [Checklist 5 \(23kb Acrobat\)](#)
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