



guardians of drinking water quality

DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE

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Information Letter 02/09

To: Board Level and Day to Day contacts of Water and Sewerage Companies and Water Companies in England and Wales

Dear Sir/Madam

CHANGES TO THE PROCESS FOR ASSESSMENT OF DRINKING WATER QUALITY EVENT NOTIFICATIONS

Purpose

The purpose of this Information Letter is to outline the Inspectorate's risk based process for the assessment of drinking water quality event notifications, **effective from 1st January 2009**. The changes effectively consolidate the Inspectorate's current event assessment process within the framework of a risk based approach. This is in line with the application of a risk based approach throughout all aspects of the Inspectorate's work and with the Better Regulation agenda.

Background

The Water Undertakers Information Direction 2004 and the associated 'Guidance on notification of events' set out the requirements for the reporting of notifiable drinking water quality events to the Inspectorate. The Inspectorate has reviewed the process it has been using for assessing and responding to the information reported, along with a number of its other core activities, to ensure an effective and consistent application of a risk based methodology. This review has also sought to incorporate and consolidate further changes required as a result of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000/2001 (amendment) Regulations 2007. Full consultation has also been undertaken with the water industry and other stakeholders .

Changes to the existing process

It must be emphasised that the approach developed by the Inspectorate will be used as a guide and assessment tool by Inspectors, and there may still be an element of discretion employed where appropriate. Our Guidance on notification of events has been amended to reflect the new approach and is available on the DWI website at <http://www.dwi.gov.uk/guidance/Guidance on the notification of events.pdf>

The main changes are as follows:

- Based on extensive analysis and testing using previous notifications, a risk matrix has been developed by the Inspectorate as a tool for the categorisation of events. The philosophy behind the approach is the likely impact of an event on consumer confidence in their water supply.
- All notifications will be assessed by the Inspectorate as before, although nominally from 1st January 2009 onwards this assessment will be in terms of one of five response categories, category 1 being the least significant and category 5 the most significant. The category allocated by the Inspector will determine the resources required from the Inspectorate to investigate the event, the information required from the company and the ultimate response given to the Company.
- Typical responses will vary from a simple acknowledgement for less significant events, where we are satisfied no further action is required, to the development of a bespoke communications plan, full investigation and detailed assessment for a highly significant event. The response categories allow for a more effective focussing of priorities and resources within the Inspectorate, and will be reflected in an improved level of service to the Industry.
- To enable the effective categorisation of events, the Inspectorate has made some modifications to the information required at the three working day report stage, as detailed in the notification of events document. Companies are also requested to ensure that their reporting documentation is updated to reflect the new requirements effective from 1st January 2009.
- Timescales for responses required from Companies will not substantially change. As at present, the Inspectorate's event assessment will take place following submission of the Company's three working day report. It must be noted however that the resolution of more significant events may become more involved due to the nature and detail of the investigations potentially required.

In preparation for the implementation of the new process the Inspectorate has reviewed and where appropriate modified all associated internal procedures and documentation.

Copies of this letter are being sent to Pamela Taylor, Chief Executive, Water UK; Richard Wood, Water Supply and Regulation Division, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Natalie Howes, Climate Change and Water Division, Welsh Assembly Government; Colin McLaren, Drinking Water Quality Regulator for Scotland; Randal Scott, Drinking Water Inspectorate for Northern Ireland; Tony Smith and Chairs of the Regional Consumer Council for Water; Kevin Ridout, for Office of Water Services.

This letter is being sent electronically to Board Level and day to day contacts. Please acknowledge receipt by email to dwi.enquiries@defra.gsi.gov.uk. Hard copies are not being sent but the letter may be freely copied. Any enquiries about the letter should be addressed directly to Marcus Rink.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marcus Rink', written in a cursive style.

Marcus Rink
Deputy Chief Inspector, (Operations)