



guardians of drinking water quality

DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE

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Information Letter 10/2009

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

Dear Sir/Madam

REVISION OF GUIDANCE ON THE WATER SUPPLY (WATER QUALITY) REGULATIONS 2000/2001 SPECIFIC TO PFOS (PERFLUOROCTANE SULPHONATE) AND PFOA (PERFLUOROCTANOIC ACID) CONCENTRATIONS IN DRINKING WATER

Purpose

1. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the publication of a revised guidance document entitled "Guidance on the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000/01 specific to PFOS (perfluorooctane sulphonate) and PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid) concentrations in drinking water". The document is enclosed with this letter and will shortly be placed on the Inspectorate's website (www.dwi.gov.uk) in Adobe® (pdf) format.

Background

2. As part of its regulatory duties DWI provides technical advice to Ministers on drinking water quality and guidance to the water industry on compliance with the relevant regulations to enable water companies to fulfil their statutory obligations regarding the safety of drinking water supplies. Original guidance on PFOS and PFOA was issued in June 2007. The revised guidance enclosed with this letter and dated October 2009 replaces the original guidance.

Reasons for the changes

3. The 2007 guidance document was based on independent health advice including a provisional tolerable daily intake (TDI)¹ value of 3 µg/kg body weight (bw) derived by the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT).

¹ TDI is an estimate of the amount of a substance in food and drinking water that can be ingested over a lifetime without appreciable risk

4. In July 2009 the COT reconsidered its advice on PFOA in light of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) derivations of a tolerable daily intake (TDI) and a Provisional Health Advisory Value, respectively. Both EFSA and the USEPA used the same toxicity endpoint but employed different uncertainty factors in deriving their health guidelines. In summary, the COT agreed with the TDI of 1.5 µg/kg bw recommended by EFSA. The COT also considered that this should remain provisional and be reviewed as new information becomes available. The COT considered that, on the basis of available information, this provisional TDI is adequate to protect against the range of identified toxic effects caused by PFOA.
5. Consequently the trigger levels for PFOA set out on the Inspectorate's guidance have been revised accordingly. The "wholesomeness" trigger value has been reduced from 10 µg/l to 5 µg/l and the "notification" trigger value has been reduced from 90 µg/l to 45 µg/l.
6. As part of its review, the COT also reconsidered the TDI for PFOS and confirmed that its previous advice remained appropriate. Consequently the trigger levels for PFOS set out on the Inspectorate's guidance remain unchanged.
7. In addition to the changes to PFOA trigger levels, the number of tiers has been revised from 3 to 4 to reflect the risk assessment requirements of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000 (Amendment) Regulations 2007 introduced since the original guidance.
8. Although the Inspectorate is not aware that either PFOS or PFOA is present in drinking water at levels which would cause concern anywhere in England or Wales, the persistent nature of these compounds, and the wide variety of potential sources are such that the Inspectorate considers it appropriate to provide guidance to water companies on a precautionary basis. Companies are reminded of the need to consider this guidance in the light of other advice received from local health professionals or their own independent medical adviser should the need arise in the future for specific action to be taken to safeguard any given drinking water supply.
9. 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; Olwen Minney, Water Management Team, Welsh Assembly Government; Colin McLaren, Drinking Water Quality Regulator for Scotland; Margaret Herron, Drinking Water Inspectorate for Northern Ireland; Tony Smith and Chairs of the Regional Consumer Council for Water; Noel Wheatley, for Office of Water Services; Tony Warn, Environment Agency; Nigel Harrison, Food Standards Agency; and Frances Pollitt at the Health Protection Agency.

10. This letter is being sent electronically to Board Level and day to day contacts. Please acknowledge receipt by email to dwi.informationletters@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 me using the contact details at the head of this letter.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Foster'.

Dr Jim Foster
Deputy Chief Inspector (Science & Strategy)