



guardians of drinking water quality

DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE

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DWI Information Letter 06/2011

To: Board Level and Day to Day contacts of Water and Sewerage Companies, Water Companies and licensed water suppliers in England and Wales

Dear Sir/Madam

Technical Audit of Water Companies under Section 86 of the Water Industry Act 1991: Publication of the report following the audit of STS Analytical Services at Bridgend.

Purpose

1. The purpose of this letter is to notify water companies of the publication on the DWI website of a report of a technical audit of the inorganic chemistry laboratory at Bridgend of STS Analytical Services. The report is published as Annex A to this letter.
2. The Inspectorate is making the report available more widely for the benefit of the water industry and for the purpose of learning to prevent any recurrence.

Background

3. The role of the DWI is to carry out independent checks within the framework of drinking water regulation to ensure that testing of samples is carried out to the required high standard of quality control and thus maintains public confidence in the robustness and integrity of water company results.
4. The Inspectorate visited STS AS' laboratory on 1st - 3rd September 2010 to carry out an audit prompted by a change in the Inspectorate's assessment of risk to very high.

Overall Audit Conclusions

5. Inspectors found significant evidence of fabricated results for one test parameter, logs and records completed retrospectively, and serious deficiencies in archived records. These deficiencies hampered the audit process.
6. Analytical quality control records were found which did not fit statistical expectations indicating preferential selection in the course of analysis for a number of parameters.
7. Inspectors noted a significant number of complaints from the water companies who were the customers of the laboratory, some of which lacked a robust and timely response.
8. The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000, require water companies to ensure appropriate transport and analysis of samples, including retention of records and investigations following failures.
9. The Inspectors found a lack of understanding by the laboratory and its management of the powers and duties of Inspectors (Water Industry Act 1991). There was an attempt to hide key pieces of information from Inspectors during the audit and a significant delay at the start of the audit as the management sought legal advice to inform themselves of the relevant powers under the Act.
10. Section 86 of the Act permits any warranted Inspector to enter any premises for the purposes of carrying out an investigation and take any articles away for the purposes of ongoing investigation.
11. The Inspectors noted further examples of a lack of understanding of the Act, in relation to provision of false information.
12. The Act specifies the requirements for the reporting of any information and this covers any analysis commissioned by a regulated water company and not limited to compliance parameters.
13. The Inspectorate expects that the recommendations contained within the report will be adopted by all water companies in respect of water testing arrangements.

Enquiries

14. Copies of this letter are being sent to Pamela Taylor, Chief Executive, Water UK; Mike Walker, John Bourne, WaFERR, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Olwen Minney, Water Management Team, Welsh Assembly Government; Philip Anderson, 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, Ofwat; Nick Cartwright, Environment Agency; Jane Downes, Food Standards Agency; and Frances Pollitt at the Health Protection Agency

15. 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 me using the contact details above.

Yours sincerely

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

Marcus Rink
Deputy Chief Inspector (Operations)