



DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE

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Information Letter 07/2011

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

Dear Sir/Madam

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW SCA BLUE BOOK 233: THE DETERMINATION OF TASTE AND ODOUR IN DRINKING WATERS (2010)

Purpose

The purpose of this letter is to remind companies that the Standing Committee of Analysts has released an updated method for the determination of taste and odour in drinking waters (November 2010) <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/static/documents/Research/TandO-oct26C-233.pdf>

Background

Following the removal in January 2008, of a numerical standard for odour (parameter code A003) and taste (parameter code A004), the Inspectorate issued an Information Letter 05/2009 to clarify the reporting of taste and odour data. A change request was submitted to The Standing Committee of Analysts to update the method document to reflect the change in The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000 as amended on 22 December 2007 and a new method was published in November 2010.

Detail

Guidance from Information Letter 05/2009 is still applicable and should be read in conjunction with the new method. The critical points to note in the revised methodology are:

1. It is no longer necessary to de-chlorinate every sample before testing. Only samples with detectable chlorine taste or odour, require de-chlorination prior to analysing.

2. Due to some de-chlorinating agents imparting abnormal tastes or odours to a sample, alternatives to sodium thiosulphate can be used, provided they have been fully validated to demonstrate they neither impart, nor remove tastes or odours from the sample.
3. Any detection of taste or odour in the original sample by a valid number of panellists, will now result in a dilution number of 1 (or greater). This sample then requires a descriptor, quantitative analysis (series of dilutions) and an investigation into the source of the taste or odour. A breach report and failure flag for that data should be submitted to the Inspectorate with the monthly data returns.
4. Any taste or odour breach investigation should be directed by the descriptor, so they are targeted for the type of taste or odour detected.

The Inspectorate expects that companies will work towards this new methodology with immediate effect, but should have this fully in place by the end of 2011.

Copies of this letter are being sent to Pamela Taylor, Chief Executive, Water UK; John Bourne, Water Supply and Regulation Division, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Olwen Minney, Water Management Team, Welsh 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.

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 Keith Smith.

Yours faithfully



Marcus Rink
Deputy Chief Inspector (Operations)