



guardians of drinking water quality

DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE

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DWI Information Letter 08/2011

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

Publication of report: Objectionable taste and odour in water supplies in North-East London between January and March 2010

Purpose

1. The purpose of this letter is to notify water companies of the publication on the DWI website of a report on the event leading to objectionable taste and odour in supplies North-East London. The report is published as Annex A of 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 and to add to the body of knowledge regarding the causal contaminants which have resulted in a small number of taste and odour events internationally.

Background

3. The role of the DWI is to carry out independent investigations into any event on the quality or sufficiency of water supplied which may cause a concern or risk to the health of persons to whom the water is supplied within the framework of drinking water regulation.
4. The Inspectorate considered this event to be significant through a risk based assessment.

Overall Conclusions

5. The report finds that the source of the objectionable taste and odour was the presence of two organic substances 2-ethyl-5,5-dimethyl-1,3-dioxane (2-EDD) and 2-ethyl-4-methyl-1,3-dioxolane (2-EMD). Both substances originated within waste from resin manufacture that was disposed of via commercial effluent through a sewage treatment works which in turn contaminated the quality of the raw water in the River Lee.

6. This event affected supplies managed by two water companies; Thames Water because it both uses the raw water and Essex and Suffolk Water because it receives the same raw water as a commercial bulk supply from Thames Water.
7. The report examines in detail the development of the event and the circumstances arising together with the methodologies of discovery, detection and resolution adopting a water safety plan approach of examining the supply of drinking water from catchment and its' components, the management of raw water and through to the subsequent treatment and distribution.
8. The report sets out the recommendations arising from the Inspectorate's assessment and the Inspectorate expects Water Companies to review their arrangements in light of these and to take action where necessary. In particular companies must consider contractual agreements when water is imported and exported, pre-planned assessments including mitigations, knowledge management and communication strategies to reduce the likelihood of a similar event or should a similar event occur, to enable an effective planned response.

Enquiries

9. 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; Susan Petch, 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; Philip Flaherty, 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.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.
11. The Report is available on the DWI website as Annex A to this letter <http://dwi.defra.gov.uk/stakeholders/information-letters/index.htm>

Yours sincerely



Marcus Rink
Deputy Chief Inspector (Operations)