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guardians of drinking water quality

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Information Letter 03/2012

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

Publication of Research Report on Human Pharmaceuticals in raw and treated river water to inform regulatory risk assessment methodology

Purpose

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the publication of the research report entitled **Targeted Monitoring for Human Pharmaceuticals in Vulnerable Source and Final waters. Drinking Water Inspectorate Project No. WD0805 (Ref DWI 70/2/231)** The research report is enclosed with this letter and will be placed on the Inspectorate's website (www.dwi.gov.uk) on 28 February.

Background

The Inspectorate manages the Drinking Water Quality and Health Research programme on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). This research programme supports the Inspectorate's regulatory function of assessing compliance with the regulations in relation to water company monitoring arrangements and risk assessments. In particular it addresses new and emerging hazards, and provides information to support national risk assessments, in association with the Health Protection Agency to enable the Inspectorate to provide ministers with appropriate and timely technical advice on drinking water quality.

The potential impact of environmental contamination by pharmaceuticals and other related substances including recreational drugs, was evaluated and this was published in a report in 2007 (DWI 70/2/213 Desk based review of current knowledge on pharmaceuticals in drinking water and estimation of potential levels). Whilst the findings were reassuring the study based on predictive modelling highlighted that there was little actual sample data available on the concentrations of pharmaceuticals in environmental waters used for abstraction for drinking water. Accordingly the Inspectorate commissioned a follow-up study to address the information gap.

Action to be taken by water companies

Companies should review the report and use the information to update Regulation 27 risk assessments and raw water monitoring programmes (Regulation 16A). In particular the Inspectorate expects companies to check that the substances addressed in this report are incorporated within the water safety plan methodology in use. This group of substances should be included and documented already (in hazard lists) and the publication of this report enables further refinement of the methodology by companies to target the substances of interest. The Inspectorate expects that in some instances the refined methodology will lead a company to enhance the raw water monitoring underpinning a specific water supply risk assessment. Companies are reminded of the need to have in place arrangements to take advice from local health professionals or their own independent medical adviser in relation to any enhanced monitoring results that might, at some time in the future, indicate the desirability of putting in place additional mitigation measures to safeguard any given drinking water supply.

Copies of this letter are being sent to Day to Day contacts of the Water Undertakers and Licensed Water Suppliers, Pamela Taylor, Chief Executive, Water UK; John Bourne, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Olwen Minney, Water Management Team, Welsh 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; Jane Downes, Food Standards Agency; and Frances Pollitt at the Health Protection Agency.

Yours faithfully

Jeni Colbourne
Chief Inspector of Drinking Water