

Drinking Water Quality Regulator for Scotland

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Your ref:
Our ref: A3244783
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Dear Peter

Information Letter 4/2012 – Mechanism for Reporting Drinking Water Quality Events to DWQR

Purpose

1 Information Letter 3/2012 describes the type of water quality events that Scottish Water is required to report to DWQR and provides further clarification on Priority and Non-Priority Events. This information letter provides guidance on how reporting is to take place and the nature of the information to be contained within an event notification, including the detail that is required and the categories to be used when reporting to DWQR.

Background

2 Event reporting is the main process by which Scottish Water informs DWQR and other stakeholders of a water quality event. DWQR uses the information to classify the event and determine whether further investigation is required. Consequently it is vital that sufficient information is contained within each notification and that it is clear what has happened, the impact on consumers, and what Scottish Water is doing to restore water quality.

Information to be Conveyed in Event Notifications

3 Wording should be clear and unambiguous and tell the story of the event in a manner that is easily understood by those outside Scottish Water. Communications about an event received internally from operational or other staff are unlikely to be written in a manner that will achieve this without modification. It may be helpful for Scottish Water reporting staff to read the event notification from the perspective of the external reader,

whether DWQR, CPHM or EHO, in order to assess whether the required information is being conveyed in the clearest manner.

4 The level of detail required in event notifications will naturally depend upon the complexity and seriousness of the event, and Scottish Water should exercise their judgement in this matter. All event reports should aim to provide the same basic information regardless of the nature of the event to ensure consistency and enable the reader to gain a clear understanding of what has occurred. All events should clearly contain the following information:

- a) What has happened;
- b) Basic location and timing information;
- c) Distribution area affected plus population;
- d) Why the event happened, whether confirmed or likely cause;
- e) If at a treatment works, the effect on final water quality;
- f) The implications for consumer confidence and public health;
- g) What has been done, or is planned, to rectify matters;
- h) Whether, in Scottish Water's opinion, the event is likely to recur.

5 If there are circumstances where all the information is not available, for whatever reason, the report should include an explanation of what is missing and what is being done to fill the gap. Detailed information on specific items to be included under electronic reporting field headings are given in Annex 1. These relate to the field headings used in the CSV file return submitted to DWQR – it is very important that Scottish Water is consistent in its approach to completing these.

6 Once a priority event is fully understood and resolved, outcome information shall be provided using the same file specification. All outcome information, whether priority or non-priority, should attempt to anticipate and address all obvious supplementary questions that may be raised by DWQR or other stakeholders.

Sample Information

7 Many events are triggered by a failure of the regulatory standard. Where this is the case it is important that the full details of the sample are communicated.

8 Regulatory samples are those taken for compliance purposes under the Water Supply (Water Quality)(Regulations) 2001 or the *Cryptosporidium* (Scottish Water) Directions 2003. Scottish Water is not required to report non-regulatory samples to DWQR as events, unless the sample failure potentially constitutes a risk to health necessitating precautionary action or advice. It may sometimes be necessary to report the results of a non-regulatory sample where a health concern was generated, or, more commonly, provide details of non regulatory samples as additional evidence supporting an event generated by an original regulatory sample failure. **Non-regulatory samples are not to be reported via the "EventSample" CSV file.** Instead, Scottish Water should send non-regulatory sample data to DWQR mailbox (drinkingwater@scotland.gsi.gov.uk) via a separate, formatted spreadsheet that clearly and logically sets out all the supporting data. The email should be named such that the event to which it relates is clearly indicated, and the accompanying event notification should reference the file.

- 9 For all samples, the following information is required as a minimum:
- a. LIMS sample number
 - b. Date and time the sample was taken
 - c. Exact location from where sample was taken (including postcode if relevant)
 - d. Parameter failing
 - e. Failing value measured including units
 - f. Other results for regulatory parameters measured in the same sample

10 All microbiological sample results, whether from regulatory sampling or not, must be reported with free and total chlorine residual measurements.

Additional Information

11 It is acknowledged that supporting information such as photographs and plots from SCADA systems can be helpful in explaining events where the situation warrants it. These should be emailed to the DWQR mailbox, again with the email clearly named for the event to which it relates.

Action Taken by DWQR

12 On classifying a water quality event, DWQR takes into account the seriousness of the matter and the impact, or potential impact, on public health and consumer confidence. DWQR will attempt to classify the event based on the information reported by Scottish Water. If the event is declared an incident and, in DWQR's opinion, Scottish Water has provided sufficient information to produce an assessment, no incident report will be required. Where there is insufficient information a full incident report will be requested, to be provided to DWQR within 28 days of the request. It is likely that larger events and incidents will require a full report due to the complexity of the information needed to undertake an assessment, but Scottish Water should not assume that an incident where a report is not requested is viewed less seriously by DWQR than one with a report. The information required in a Scottish Water incident report is described in the annex to Information Letter 3/2012.

Further Information and Enquiries

13 Enquiries about this letter should be addressed to Matthew Bower (0131 244 0743). This letter has been sent electronically. A copy will also be sent to the Water Industry Commission for Scotland, Consumer Focus Scotland and Health Protection Scotland.

Yours sincerely,



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Drinking Water Quality Regulator for Scotland