



Audit of Scottish Water's Water Quality Event Consumer Contacts

Date of Audit	10 August 2018
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Scottish Water Staff Present	Iain Ogilvie

Summary of Audit

Purpose

Scottish Water reports Water Quality events to DWQR as they arise. These may be initiated through a failure of a water quality standard or some operational event at a water treatment works or in the distribution system. In addition, failures of treatment processes and interruptions to the water supply can have a detrimental effect on water quality and may lead to failures of standards at consumers taps.

Scottish Water reported 808 events to DWQR in 2017. Thirty two of these events were classified by DWQR as incidents. Seven events were selected for audit from those most likely to have had a potential wider impact on water quality at consumers taps. Four of which had been declared as incidents.

The audit was undertaken to gauge the capture of information from consumers when they contact Scottish water in relation to a water quality event; how this is reported to DWQR in water quality event notifications, outcomes and incident reports; the use of and reporting of social media interactions and the overall reporting of consumer contact numbers to regulators and stakeholders. A period of time commencing 2 weeks prior to the recorded start date of the event to 2 weeks following that date was taken to examine the daily volumes and profile of all types of consumer contacts received by Scottish Water.

Summary of audit

The audit demonstrated the importance of making full use of consumer contact records in the investigation and reporting of water quality events. It is essential that the full impact and duration of the circumstances which prompt consumers to contact Scottish Water, be clearly understood and that the information be imparted in event notifications to allow stakeholders to gain a clear understanding of the event.

Through the seven events selected, it is my view that the use within the contacts database of Contact Types 'Customer requesting info following planned work' (similarly for unplanned work) and 'Bottled water request', mask the real issue and reason for a consumer making the contact e.g. discoloured water. This being the case, I am concerned that Scottish Water understate in their corporate reporting and reporting to Regulators and stakeholders, the real extent of consumer concerns around water quality issues.

The broad thrust of water quality events are demonstrated to be reflected in Event Notification and Incident Report information but it is clear that the finer detail which would provide clarity to event commencement, duration, issues of concern and relevant contact numbers could be improved. The issue described above, of allocating contact type to a call, also has an impact on internal SW teams in their analysis of event impact. It is fair to say however that in the cases examined, DWQR's classification for the events would not have been changed with the full detail now known of consumer contacts relevant to the respective events.

In the examination of contacts and utilising information provided in Event notifications, Incident Reports and the reports drawn from corporate databases to inform this audit, it is evident that different results can be produced and presented. The variance in numbers of contacts and their detail were small in the cases examined but it leads to a concern that any information being presented may not be entirely accurate.

Reference was made in this audit to the volume of daily contacts recorded by Scottish Water across social media platforms. These indicate, in most of the cases, that there was an increase in daily totals across the days impacted by the selected WQ events. Further consideration should be given as to how this reflection of consumer concerns around their water supply can be incorporated into the more formal contacts to illustrate a more rounded picture of the impact of any given event.

William Byers, Drinking Water Specialist.