

## Scotland's Drinking Water has Never Been Better

**The Drinking Water Quality Regulator's annual report on Scotland's tap water shows that the quality of what we are drinking is the best ever.**

**The report by the DWQR on the quality of supplies during 2010 found that well over 99% of tests on samples complied with strict regulatory standards.**

In 2010 Scottish Water carried out nearly 324,000 tests on its water at treatment works, storage reservoirs and consumers' taps. Of the 155,302 tests on samples taken directly from taps in people's homes, 99.83% met the standard. This compares with 99.78% in 2009 and 99.14% in 2003, the year after Scottish Water was formed.

Compliance for most parameters showed an improvement, significantly so for pH (hydrogen ion), colour, iron and Trihalomethanes (THMs). The number of failures for this last parameter attracted criticism from the Regulator for the high failure rate, so this year's figures are to be welcomed although more still needs to be done in some areas.

Consumer satisfaction with the water supply across Scotland is up too. In 2010 Scottish Water received 20,495 contacts from consumers concerned about the quality of their supplies, compared with 24,168 in the previous year, but the DWQR would like to see these numbers fall further:

A DWQR spokesman said:

"We are delighted with these results that show that Scottish tap water is top quality. The people of Scotland can draw a glass of water from the tap and be confident that their supplies are tested thousands of times each year and that they meet some of the tightest quality standards in the world.

It's very important that the water tastes and looks good too and it's comforting to see the number of complaints to Scottish Water reduce. DWQR believes that this figure has further to fall and the work Scottish Water is doing to renovate old iron water mains and improve its control of chlorine at treatment works should achieve this."

Not everyone in Scotland receives their drinking water from Scottish Water – some 150,000 people, approximately 3% of the population, receive water from a private water supply. The quality of some of these supplies remains of concern, and 18.35% of samples taken from these supplies last year by local authorities contained the *E.coli* bacterium.

The DWQR spokesman said:

"Local Authorities across Scotland are working hard to communicate the health risk these private supplies pose to the owners and users and offering support to make improvements. Where improvements are being made it is vital that the new treatment that is installed is properly maintained so that the benefit is not lost."

## NOTES TO NEWS EDITORS

1. **A full copy of *Drinking Water Quality in Scotland 2010* is available at [www.dwqr.org.uk](http://www.dwqr.org.uk)**
2. Drinking water quality regulation began in 1991 and drinking water quality was monitored by the Scottish Executive and its predecessor before the post of DWQR was created in 2002, at the same time as Scottish Water.
3. The Drinking Water Quality Regulator is independent of Scottish Ministers and ensures that the drinking water quality duties imposed on Scottish Water are complied with. DWQR reviews water quality data from samples taken by Scottish Water and undertakes targeted audits examining all aspects of its operations. The Regulator also supervises local authority enforcement of the Private Water Supply Regulations. An annual report is presented to Scottish Ministers detailing the assessment of drinking water quality during the previous year.
4. Where drinking water does not meet the required standard, the Regulator has powers to investigate and ensure problems are resolved. This can involve taking enforcement action or prosecution.
5. The DWQR also has a role in helping to define Scottish Water's Investment Programme and is committed to ensuring that drinking water supplies in Scotland are of the highest possible standard.
6. Approximately two thirds of the contacts received by Scottish Water concerning water quality were about discoloured supplies – this is usually caused by corrosion of iron water mains or failure of the treatment process to remove manganese. Approximately 13% of calls concerned tastes and odours, with complaints about the taste of chlorine being the most common category.
7. It is estimated that around 150,000 people rely on a private water supply for their drinking water, with many thousands more using them occasionally, typically on holiday. Many of these supplies have limited or no treatment. The main risk comes from microorganisms, including *E.coli*. Strengthened regulations governing the quality of private water supplies were introduced in 2006.
8. The DWQR website [www.dwqr.org.uk](http://www.dwqr.org.uk) has recently been updated to improve the information available to consumers. Innovative mapping software has been used to enable consumers to find their local water supply and check the latest quality data from it. This is the first time detailed water quality information has been made available in this way in the UK.
9. The previous DWQR, Colin McLaren, sadly died at the end of 2010. Work to appoint a successor is almost complete.

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