



DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE

Area 1A Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR

Enquiries: 0300 068 6400

Email: dwi.enquiries@defra.gov.uk

DWI Website: www.dwi.gov.uk

DWI Information Letter 02/2022

25 March 2022

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

Dear Sir/Madam

Reporting of Taste Results

Background

1. Under the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2016 as amended and the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2018 (Wales), water companies are obliged to taste samples in accordance with regulation 16 (England) or regulation 15 (Wales), (The Regulations).
2. There are inconsistencies in the approach taken by water companies when a taste test is not performed on a sample taken for compliance purposes.

Purpose

3. This letter shall clarify the Inspectorate's expectations on the reporting and subsequent actions to be taken where a taste test has not been performed due to an objectionable odour or appearance.

Discussion

4. There are a variety of reasons that an analyst may reject a sample for tasting, whether that be the perception that the sample may be harmful to health, have an objectionable odour or other reason.
5. Regardless of the reason, the taste panellists are deemed to represent the consumer and the rejection is a regulatory breach. It is not considered appropriate to record the result as 'not tested' and to reschedule the test for another random location to be completed at a later date.

6. This is not considered appropriate as it leads to the under reporting of positive taste results.

New Requirements

7. With effect from 1 May 2022, if a regulatory sample is not tasted due to the odour or appearance being deemed unacceptable by the taste panel, water companies shall record the taste as a contravention of the regulations and report this compliance failure to the Inspectorate as required by the Information Direction.
8. The result cannot be given a dilution number as the test has not been completed. It should be reported to the Inspectorate simply as a regulatory contravention without a dilution number being allocated to it. This approach is acceptable to UKAS (United Kingdom Accreditation Service).
9. Water companies are required fully investigate the cause of all taste and odour contraventions and take appropriate remedial action to protect consumers and comply with the Regulations.
10. Companies are advised to consider if advice, restrictions of use, or alternative supplies should be given to consumers whilst their investigation is carried out.
11. If a sample is not tasted because the bacteriological analysis was unsatisfactory, then the taste analysis may be rescheduled in the normal way.

This letter is being sent electronically to board level and day to day contacts. Please acknowledge receipt by email to dw.enquiries@defra.gov.uk. Hard copies are not being sent but the letter may be freely copied. Any enquiries about this letter should be addressed to Martin Bird, Principal Inspector, Martin.Bird@defra.gov.uk.

Copies of this letter are being sent to Christine McGourty, Chief Executive, Water UK; Davide Minotti, Deputy Director Water Services, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Eifiona Williams, Water Management Team, Welsh Government; Sue Petch, Drinking Water Quality Regulator for Scotland; Catriona Davis, Drinking Water Inspectorate for Northern Ireland; Alice Laycock and Emma Clancy, CCW; Alison Cullen, Ofwat; Anne Dacey, Environment Agency; Benedict Duncan, Food Standards Agency; and Stephen Robjohns and Anna Ireland at the UK Health Security Agency

Yours faithfully



Martin Bird
Principal Inspector