

C Events Affecting Water Quality

- Investigating events that affect, or potentially affect, the quality of drinking water supplies
- Learning lessons and preventing events from recurring
- Taking necessary action against water companies
- 398 events notified in 2002

Water companies are required to report all water quality problems to the Inspectorate

The Water Undertakers (Information) Direction 1998 (the 'Information Direction') requires water companies to inform the Inspectorate of all events that have affected, or are likely to affect, drinking water quality, or sufficiency of supplies and where, as a result, there may be a risk to consumers' health.

Companies are required to notify the Inspectorate as soon as possible of any events which, in their opinion, meet the criteria set down in the Information Direction.

DWI Information Letter 13/99 provides further guidance on these criteria.

Notified events must be confirmed in writing within 72 hours, and a full report must be provided within one month for all events deemed by the Inspectorate to be incidents.

Companies are also encouraged to notify the Inspectorate of events not meeting the prescribed criteria, but which could impact on water quality or cause concern to consumers.

Water quality events are classified according to the following definitions:

Event

Any occurrence which by its nature is required to be notified under the Information Direction. Water companies have to use their judgement in any particular set of circumstances.

Incident

A sub-set of events defined by the Inspectorate to include:

- non-trivial and unexpected breach of Part II of the Regulations; or
- a breach of Part VI of the Regulations; or
- an unusual deterioration in water quality; or
- a significant risk to the health of consumers; or
- adverse water quality changes perceived by consumers as significant; or
- a cause for significant media interest.

Non-incident

All other event notifications not classified as incidents.

Full text of the Water Undertakers (Information) Direction 1998 (included in DWI Information Letter 4/98) and DWI Information Letter 13/99 can be found on the web site at www.dwi.gov.uk

The Inspectorate assesses every event and, if required, takes action against water companies

The Assessment – Inspectors assess the water company’s 72 hour report to determine whether the event is an incident. If the event is deemed to be an incident a 30 day report may also be required. The Inspector assesses all the information available to determine:

- ❑ what caused the problem and whether or not it was avoidable;
- ❑ what the company did in response and how it handled the incident;
- ❑ what lessons can be learned to prevent similar incidents in the future;
- ❑ if there were any breaches of enforceable regulations; and
- ❑ whether the company supplied water during the incident that was unfit for human consumption.

The Outcome – This table summarises the typical outcomes of assessments based on the severity of the problem and the actions taken as a result.

Outcome of Assessment	Action Taken
No breaches of regulations. Company acted appropriately in response to the problem.	Letter of assessment is sent to the company and copied to the relevant local and district health authorities, and to OFWAT, and if appropriate, to the Welsh Assembly Government (the Assembly Government)
Breaches of regulations and/or deficiencies in response.	Letter of assessment to the company, including recommendations for action which the company <i>must</i> take to address problems which the incident exposed. The relevant local and district health authorities, and OFWAT are informed of the outcome, as appropriate. as is the Assembly Government.
Significant or repeated breaches of enforceable regulations.	Enforcement action initiated against the company. A legal process to ensure that the company takes all necessary action to prevent further breaches. The relevant local and district health authorities, and OFWAT are informed of the outcome, as appropriate, as is the Assembly Government.
Supply of water unfit for human consumption as a result of either deficiencies in the company’s response or failings in its actions.	Initiation of either prosecution proceedings against the company or the issue of a formal caution for a criminal offence. The relevant local and district health authorities, and OFWAT are informed of the outcome, as appropriate, as is the Assembly Government.

More detail on the assessment process is available on the web site www.dwi.gov.uk. This also includes a flow diagram which illustrates the process and time-scale in which incidents and non-incidents are managed by water companies and the Inspectorate respectively.

Details of events notified and assessments made during 2002

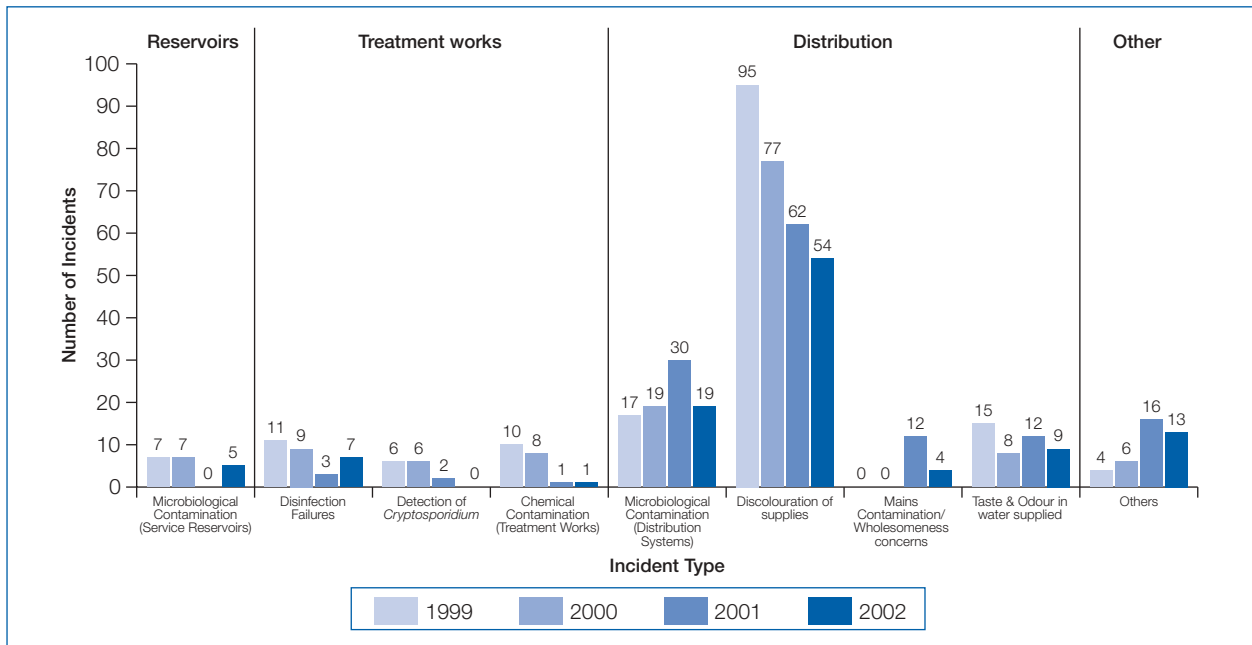
Brief descriptions of all incidents are given in the relevant individual company sections in Part 2 of this report. A total of 112 incidents which affected, or were likely to affect, the quality of water supplied to approximately 2.2 million consumers, were notified to the Inspectorate during 2002. The period during which water quality was actually compromised ranged from a few hours to several days. In addition, 286 notifications were made which were classified as non-incidents.

The Inspectorate aims to complete its assessments within three months of notification. Therefore any events notified towards the end of the calendar year might be assessed in the next calendar year. Also, if prosecution proceedings are being considered, the assessment will not be completed until such proceedings have been concluded. Thus at 31 March 2003, a total of 16 (14 from 2002 and 2 pre-2002) assessments were outstanding.

The following table summarises the Inspectorate's position on 31 March 2003 in assessing the incidents and non-incidents notified under the Information Direction.

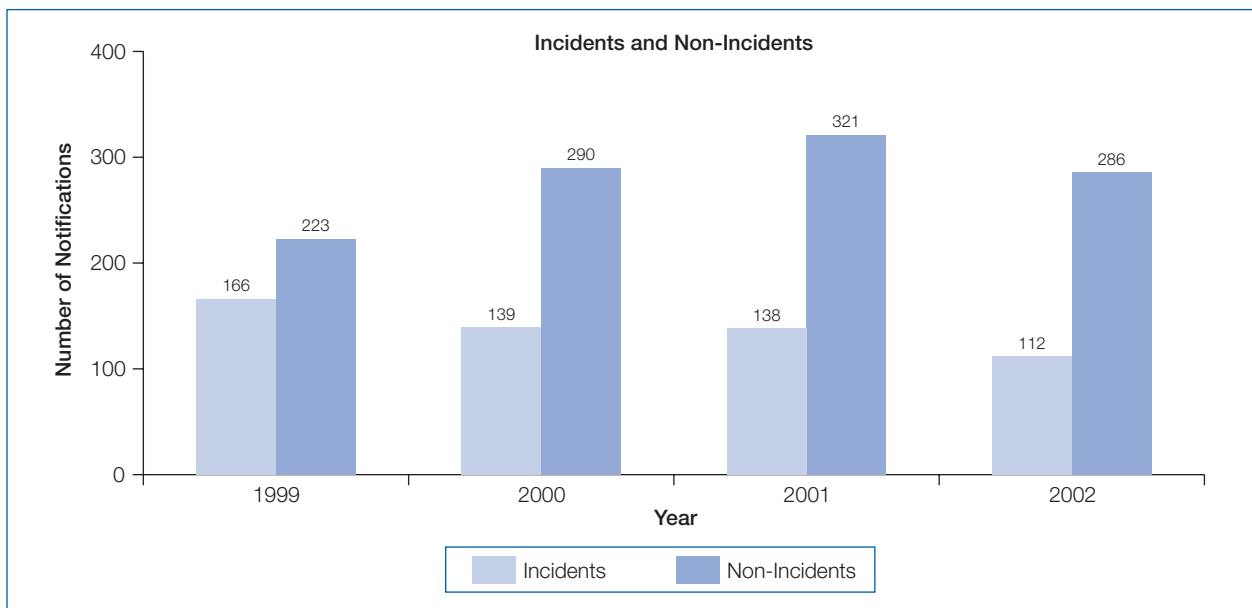
Incidents Notified in 2002:	112
Non-Incidents Notified in 2002:	286
Total Number of Events notified in 2002	398
2002 Events Assessed:	384
No action required:	311
Recommendations:	73
Enforcement Action:	0
Caution:	0
Prosecutions:	0
Pre- 2002 Events Assessed in 2002:	105
No action required:	69
Recommendations:	35
Enforcement Action:	0
Caution:	1
Prosecutions:	0
Total Number of Assessments Completed in 2002	489
2002 Assessments Outstanding:	14
Pre-2002 Assessments Outstanding:	2
Total Number of Assessments Outstanding	16

Incidents are categorised by the nature, origin and effect of the problem. The chart below provides a breakdown and a four-year comparison (1999 – 2002) of incident categories.



The total number of notifications made to the Inspectorate during 2002 has decreased from the number made in 2001. The number of notifications that have been considered as incidents also decreased in 2002.

It should be noted that following completion of assessment by the Inspectorate, a few of the events initially classified as incidents might subsequently be re-classified as non-incidents, and *vice versa*.



Companies prosecuted or cautioned for supplying water unfit for human consumption

There were no prosecutions of water companies during the 2002 reporting period. In January 2003 the Inspectorate issued a formal caution to Yorkshire Water Services relating to an incident in which discoloured water was supplied in the Sandygates area of Sheffield in June 2001.

Summary of Incidents and Prosecutions 1999 – 2002

The following table gives the number of prosecutions and cautions that have taken place following the Inspectorate's investigation of incidents, which were concluded between 1999 and 2002. It also shows the number of court cases pending, and the number of incidents that are still under consideration as at 31 March 2003. In studying the table it is important to take into account the following:

- ❑ the number of incidents occurring can be expected to be approximately proportional to the size of the water company, and particularly the length of the distribution system;
- ❑ companies with no incidents in these categories are not included in the table;
- ❑ many are minor incidents affecting a small number of consumers;
- ❑ many of the incidents occur for reasons outside the control of water companies, e.g. a burst main;
- ❑ prosecution cases can take at least a year to get to court so they do not necessarily reflect the position today.

Water Company Incidents and Prosecutions 1999–2002

Water company	Population supplied	Km of mains	No of incidents notified in year				Prosecutions (cautions) completed in year				Court cases pending at 31/03/03	Incidents still under investigation as at 31/03/03
			1999	2000	2001	2002	1999	2000	2001	2002	0	[+] Pre 2002
Anglian	4,100,000	35,995	16	18	14	21	2	-	1	-	0	3
Bristol Water	1,086,000	6,500	0	0	1	2	-	-	-	-	0	0
Bournemouth and W Hants	432,000	2,800	0	0	0	1	-	-	-	-	0	0
Cambridge Water	291,700	2,197	0	0	3	1	-	-	-	-	0	0
Dee Valley	258,500	1,953	1	0	1	0	-	-	-	-	0	0
Dŵr Cymru	2,800,000	24,900	9	11	15	12	-	-	1	-	0	1
Essex & Suffolk	1,700,000	8,393	5	4	1	3	-	-	-	-	0	1
Folkestone & Dover	163,300	1,101	0	2	2	0	-	-	-	-	0	0
Hartlepool	91,000	513	0	1	0	1	-	-	-	-	0	0
Mid Kent	574,700	4,167	4	0	2	0	-	1	1(1)	-	0	0
Northumbrian	2,600,000	16,687	12	11	21	14	-	(1)	-	-	0	1
Portsmouth	647,000	3,200	4	1	2	0	-	-	-	-	0	0
Severn Trent	7,360,000	41,000	20	19	5	2	1	-	-	-	0	0
South East	1,400,000	9,663	4	7	1	1	2	-	-	-	0	0
South Staffs	1,200,000	5,828	1	3	2	5	-	-	-	-	0	0
South West	1,500,000	15,000	4	7	4	5	2	-	-	-	0	1 [+1]
Southern	2,260,000	13,350	2	3	7	9	-	-	-	-	0	2
Sutton & East Surrey	637,000	3,373	2	0	2	1	-	(1)	-	-	0	0[+1]
Tending	145,000	910	1	0	2	0	-	-	-	-	0	0
Thames	7,900,000	31,400	13	7	7	7	1	-	-	-	0	0
Three Valleys	2,900,000	13,500	10	9	11	6	-	(1)	-	-	0	0
United Utilities	6,800,000	42,200	27	16	18	9	2	3(4)	-	-	0	5
Wessex	1,200,000	10,800	4	4	5	2	-	(1)	-	-	0	0
Yorkshire	4,710,000	31,000	27	16	12	10	-	4	1(4)	(1)	0	0
TOTAL	52,756,200	326,430	166	139	138	112	10(0)	8(8)	4(5)	(1)	0	14[+2]