



Drinking water
safety plan

Introduction

A continuous supply of safe drinking water is vital to maintain public health. Every day United Utilities provides high quality drinking water to approximately 3.2 million homes, factories and offices, serving 7 million people across the north west of England. Ensuring the quality of that drinking water is fundamental to the service we provide to our customers. We do this by ensuring that the risks to drinking water quality are identified and managed.

The World Health Organisation says:

“The most effective means of consistently ensuring the safety of a drinking-water supply is through the use of a comprehensive risk assessment and risk management approach that encompasses all steps in water supply from catchment to consumer.”

What is a Drinking Water Safety Plan?

We've adopted this risk management approach and developed a Drinking Water Safety Plan (DWSP) that is central to the way in which we ensure safe drinking water now and in the future. Not only is it the right thing to do, it's also consistent with the regulatory requirements governing drinking water in England and Wales. Crucial to this process is the role of stakeholders in developing and maintaining a shared responsibility for drinking water quality across the entire chain, from source to tap.

Benefits to our customers, stakeholders and the business

Why do it? Well, the application of the DWSP provides customers and our regulators with confidence in the quality of the water we supply each and every day. It enables us to do this not only today but in the future by anticipating what risks may arise – such as the effects of climate change – and investing our customers' money in the most cost-effective way.

Understanding the risks allows us to implement effective controls that safeguard water quality during the operation and maintenance of our treatment works and network of water mains. This proactive approach to managing risks means that we can anticipate problems and protect public health.



How does it work?

A Drinking Water Safety Plan consists of three core elements:

Hazard characterisation
and risk assessment

Identification of control measures
and associated monitoring

Verification and review

DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN CONTINGENCY PLANS

When assessing the risks to drinking water quality we rank the likelihood and consequence of hazardous events, using a matrix to give a numeric risk score. This was repeated, taking into account the control measures to produce an estimate of the residual risk. Engaging with employees was crucial - holding workshops to consider the risks to catchments, treatment works, distribution systems, and within customers' premises. In recognition of a key feature of our water supply system, we looked at Large Diameter Trunk Mains (LDTMs) separately from the distribution systems. LDTMs are strategic assets that provide flexibility in managing supply and demand in the region.

In total almost 250 workshops were held with our people from Water Operations, Asset Management and technical teams.



Where are we up to?

We're making excellent progress. To date we've completed risk assessments for all our 48,500 Ha catchments, our almost 100 water treatment works, 384 service reservoirs and water towers, and 42,000 km of mains including 850 km of LDTMs. The findings were summarised in reports submitted to the Drinking Water Inspectorate in October 2008, as required by the Water Supply Regulations. Information obtained from the risk assessments was incorporated into our final business plan, submitted to Ofwat in April 2009. This plan will define the level of investment in maintaining

and enhancing water supplies during the five year period from April 2010.

We listened to the views of key stakeholders regarding the development of our DWSP and measures being taken to manage risks to drinking water quality. These included the health community across our region (Health Protection Agency, NHS, and local authorities), our regulators (DWI, EA, Natural England) and the Consumer Council for Water, which represents the views of our customers.





Where we are going

Our DWSP is key to the way in which we will manage risks to drinking water quality in the short, medium and long term. Risks are kept under continual review and the effectiveness of controls verified to make sure that the DWSP remains effective.

Central to embedding the DWSP framework into our business is the provision of training and guidance for our people involved from source to tap. They will be supported by a business process that provides consistency and assurance. In parallel we've invested in a dedicated database and reporting tool that enables performance measures to be tracked electronically.

Our DWSP enables us to identify and prioritise where we need to invest funds to maintain and improve drinking water quality for the benefit of our customers and stakeholders.

Embracing the DWSP approach to proactive and effective risk management is an important part of our journey to become a world class operator of utility infrastructure.

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World Health Organisation

www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/en

The Drinking Water Inspectorate

www.dwi.gov.uk

The Environment Agency

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Consumer Council for Water

www.ccwater.org.uk

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BUILDING FOR TOMORROW**