

Water Industry Workshop

Wednesday 11 January 2017

The effective management of serious water quality incidents in the non-household market (NHH)

Over 90 delegates from wholesalers, retailers, Defra, Ofwat, DWI, CC Water and WRAS (Table 1) attended the joint Water UK-MOSL workshop on managing drinking water quality incidents in the non-household retail market this week.

The event, that originated from the “looking round corners” workshop last summer, explore barriers and solutions to ensuring that when a major incident happens that all parties are working together to ensure customer safety is maintained.



The overarching themes brought up in the presentations and discussions included central access to contact details, improved flows of data and information, standardisation of customer facing messages and agreed definitions. There was a clear desire to maintain dialogue both in the pre and post market opening. The outputs of the workshop are being compiled and will be shared shortly.

Special thanks goes to the presenters on the day for sharing their thoughts and challenges (Defra, MOSL, Scottish Water, Anglian Water, Yorkshire Water, Affinity Water, Northumbrian and UU).

Retailer organisations	Wholesaler organisations	Stakeholders
Affinity For Business	Affinity Water	CC Water
Anglian Water Business	Anglian Water	Defra
Business Stream	Bristol Water	DWI
C&C	DCW / Welsh Water	MOSL
Castle Water	Independent Water Networks	Ofwat
Clear Business Water	Northumbrian Water	Water UK
NWGB	Portsmouth Water	WRAS
Pennon Water Services	Scottish Water	
Regent Water	Severn Trent Water	
The Water Retail Company	South East Water	
Three Sixty	South Staffordshire Water	
Water Plus	South West Water	
Water Scan	Southern Water	
Water2Business	SSE Water	
	Sutton and East Surrey Water	
	Thames Water	
	United Utilities	
	Wessex Water	
	Yorkshire Water	

Table 1 – organisations attending the workshop

Key themes arising from table discussions and feedback

✓ Data and information:

Customer contact data and 24 hour retailer contact data in the event of an emergency was raised on several occasions. Both wholesale and retail organisations recognised the importance of being able to access up to date and accurate information to enable the efficient management of incidents. It was recognised that a code change relating to emergency contact details is being considered by a working group, however currently the codes do require retailers to share customer contact details (where available) on request from the Wholesaler in the event of an emergency.

✓ Messages and customer communications

Consistency in provision of information to both HH and NHH customers during incidents is paramount to ensuring that appropriate actions are taken by customers depending on the type of incident (do not drink, boil etc). Timeliness of advice is critical to protect public health. Retail organisations expressed that they would like to be able take generic advise and brand accordingly.

✓ Standards and definitions

In a number of discussions there was a call for more standardisation in approach. This was most evident in addressing differences in approach to classification and management of “sensitive customers” but was also discussed in relation to the establishment of site specific plans. Delegates suggested that the sector should look to address this.

✓ Overarching wholesaler duty

In the event of any drinking water quality emergency the overarching responsibility will lie with the wholesale water provider to ensure that public health is protected. This includes provision of advice to the appropriate parties as well as provision of alternative supplies as needed.

✓ Retailer voice

Whilst the feedback from the event was positive and all delegates found it useful it was clear that future events should have a focus on the role of the retailer and the support that they can offer during incidents.

Sources of information

Documents and presentations from workshop - <http://bit.ly/11JanWorkshop>

MOSL forum - <https://www.mosl.co.uk/forum/the-effective-management-of-serious-water-quality-incidents-in-the-non-household-market/>

Recommendations

The following recommendations are to be made to Water UK and to MOSL to ensure that the key outputs from the workshop are addressed.

- Water UK and MOSL ensure that the outputs from this workshop are shared widely and that continued dialogue takes place across the sector in this subject with future events, provision of discussion forums and communications, both ahead of and post market opening.
- A working group is established to consider developing consistent definitions on sensitive customers, site specific plans and customer messages during a water quality incident.
- A working group is established to produce a FAQ document on roles and responsibilities of both retailers and wholesalers whilst managing drinking water quality incidents.

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