

# HEALTH PROTECTION AGENCY

Division of Chemical Hazards and Poisons (London)  
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## Water incidents

### Water Section 1 - Drinking water supplies

1. Recommendations for questions to ask the Water Utility
2. Post Incident Questions

### Water Section 2 – Private drinking water supplies

1. Recommendations for questions to ask Environmental Health Officers
2. Recommendations for questions to ask the Water Utility
3. Post Incident Questions

### Water Section 3 - Surface water

1. Recommendation for questions to ask the Environmental Health Officer

### Water Section 4 - Marine or coastal water

1. Recommendations for questions to ask the Environment Agency/Maritime Coastguard Agency

## Water Section 1 - Drinking water supplies

### 1. Recommendations for questions to ask the Water Utility

#### *Exposure*

- Have “at risk” groups been identified and alerted including: home and hospital renal dialysis patients, bottle fed infants, residential and nursing homes, schools, etc.?
- Have all affected drinking water consumers been informed, including food and drink manufacturers, who may be using potentially contaminated water?
- What quantities of water are likely to have been consumed?
- Have alternative drinking water supplies been arranged, are alternative bathing and laundry facilities required?
  - if yes, have consumers been notified not to drink, cook with or use tap water?
  - are bowser water supplies safe to drink?
  - have the elderly and disabled access to alternative supplies?
  - are large alternative supplies available for critical users?
  - have supplies been cut off?
- What samples are being taken and analysed?
  - who is taking the samples?
  - is there appropriate quality control?
  - are duplicate samples being taken and analysed by an independent organisation?
  - are samples being tested for taste and odour?
- Is there a possibility of microbiological contamination as well as chemical?


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## *Water supply*

- What is the source of drinking water currently in supply and the treatment processes used?
  - have there been any changes in supply or treatment?
  - have there been any previous problems?
  - is water from different sources mixed in supply?
- Have drinking water abstractions been closed?
  - when will they be re-opened?
  - how much water is in storage reservoirs
- Have sewage treatment works been taken off line?
  - what impact will this have?
- Have water treatment works been taken off line?
  - what impact will this have?
  - is disinfection still effective?
- Could drinking water storage reservoirs have been affected?
- What action for remediation/decontamination is taking place?
  - are water pipes being flushed to remove contaminated water?
  - can water supply areas be re-zoned to limit the area affected?
  - are there any processes available to remove contaminants, e.g. activated carbon?
  - what is the expected time frame for remediation/decontamination?


## **2. Post Incident Questions**

- Does the drinking water now meet required standards for drinking water quality?
- Have water utility drinking water pipes and domestic water pipes, tanks and plumbing fittings been adequately decontaminated?
- If permanent new water pipes have been installed, have these been verified to be uncontaminated?
- Is a report to the Drinking Water Inspectorate required?
- Consider compiling a list of renal patients with routine updating for easy reference in the event of future incidents


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## Water Section 2 – Private drinking water supplies

### 1. Recommendations for questions to ask Environmental Health Officers

- Have alternative drinking water supplies been arranged. Are bowser water supplies safe to drink?
- Are there hospital, drinking water, or food and drink processor or manufacturer abstractions in the area? Should they be closed?


### 2. Recommendations for questions to ask the Water Utility

- Inform water utility of the contamination, even if it is a private supply, may be a public water abstraction from the same aquifer.

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### 3. Post Incident Questions

- Does the drinking water now meet required standards for drinking water quality?
- Have drinking water supply pipes, tanks and plumbing fittings been adequately decontaminated?
- If permanent new water supply pipes have been installed, have these been verified to be uncontaminated?
- Is a report to the Drinking Water Inspectorate required?


## Water Section 3 - Surface water

### 1. Recommendation for questions to ask the Environmental Health Officer

Is the area used for water sports, swimming, fishing, etc.?

Are there any other uses of the water resource, e.g. abstraction for drinking water or food and drink processing or manufacturing, fishing or agricultural usage for irrigation or livestock watering?

Consider advising the public of contamination and controlling access to the affected area by people and animals (N.B. policing controls may be difficult)

Will the area of contamination change over time, e.g. movement down a river?

Could drinking water storage reservoirs have been affected?

Is long term monitoring of the affected, or potentially affected area necessary?


## Water Section 4 - Marine or coastal water

### 1. Recommendations for questions to ask the Environment Agency/Maritime Coastguard Agency

- Is the area used for water sports, swimming, etc.?
- Is there any recreational or commercial fishing, or collection of other marine wildlife for food in the area?
  - are aquatic organisms being sampled, for example by CEFAS?
- Consider advising the public of contamination and controlling access to the affected area?
