

Category 2 Responders - Generic Emergency Planning Arrangements

Water and sewerage undertakers

Water and sewerage service providers in England and Wales

Water and sewerage services covers the primary function of providing drinking water and of treating sewage. As of March 2006 there are 25 companies (or 'undertakers') in the privatised water industry in England and Wales. Of these 10 provide both water and sewerage services, while the remainder provide water services only.

Planning for Major Water and Wastewater Incidents in England and Wales: Generic Guidance

Legislation

These companies operate under the provisions of the **Water Industry Act 1991** and the **Water Act 2003** in both England and Wales. These set out the regulatory framework within which the privatised water service companies (formerly water authorities) and water only companies (formerly statutory water companies) operate in England and Wales. In particular, this legislation identifies the statutory responsibilities and regulatory framework that applies to undertakers. The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is responsible for English water (and sewerage) companies. Policy responsibilities for water companies whose areas are wholly or mainly in Wales rest with the Welsh Assembly Government.

The Secretary of State and the Welsh Assembly Government have powers to issue Directions to undertakers in the interests of national security and/or mitigating the effects of a civil emergency. The current **Direction on national security and emergency measures for the water and sewerage industry** was issued in 1998. There are provisions in the Water Act 2003 for the Secretary of State to issue Directions to the new licensees, resulting from the Government's introduction of competition for the water industry, in respect of national security and emergency planning. Directions are expected to be issued to licensees during 2006. Drinking water standards are set by the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) - all standards comply with EU and World Health Organisation (WHO) targets.

Scotland and Northern Ireland

In Scotland, the policy responsibility for Scottish Water (a public corporation, the sole water and sewerage undertaker in Scotland) rests with the Scottish Executive under Scottish legislation. These organisations work closely together with DEFRA and the rest of the water industry in England and Wales to ensure that all plans will operate together if required. There is a similar Direction in place to that for England and Wales. In Northern Ireland the Water Service Agency reports to the Department for Regional Development.

Contingency Plans

The methodology for identifying and responding to vulnerabilities in the water services industry complies with international best practice. Water (and sewerage) company plans are reviewed on at least an annual basis and, where necessary, have been updated to take account of current threats and risks. 84KB, 5 pages]

Water service contingency plans are regularly tested to ensure their continuing effectiveness, often with central government participation. Defra's own plans for

responding to water and sewerage emergencies underwent review during 2004, followed in December 2005 by an exercise to test the revised plans.

Private water suppliers

Under 1% of the population of England and Wales obtain their water from an entirely private supply either on an individual or multiple property basis. The testing of such supplies is the responsibility of Local Authorities. These supplies are not subject to the Directions issued by the Secretary of State in respect of national security or emergency planning, and any emergency arrangements are entirely dependent upon what an individual local authority might have in place.