



DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE

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[Redacted]
By email: [Redacted]

Our ref: EIR2025/16731
21 August 2025

Dear [Redacted]

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Major water supply interruption events

Thank you for your request for information of 4 August 2025 about major water supply interruption events. We have handled your request the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs).

The EIRs apply to requests for environmental information, which is a broad category of information defined in regulation 2 of the EIRs. Public authorities are required to handle requests for environmental information under the EIRs. They give similar access rights to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Your information request and our response are set out below.

I was wondering if you held information regarding the total number of major water supply interruption events across the UK water industry over the last few years, and how many of which resulted in the deployment of alternative water through tankering or bottled water?

The definition of "major" is fairly flexible, I was thinking over c.1000 properties impacted, however happy for you to advise on any standard classifications of events.

I am basically trying to understand if there is an increasing or decreasing trend in major supply interruptions.

We define a major water quality event (score 5) where consumers actually or potentially suffered harm through the presence of pathogens, toxic chemicals, contamination or undisinfected water in supply. Details of our event risk index can be found on our website at the following link:

<https://dwi-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/19115039/DWI-Event-Risk-Index-ERI.pdf>.

There has been one major water supply disruption event from January 2023 until present day which is the Brixham event supplied by South West Water. However this was not a loss of supply event.

Details of loss of supply events under the Security and Emergency Measures Direction (SEMD) 2022 can be found in our Annual Reports under SEMD events, which are available on our website at: <https://www.dwi.gov.uk/what-we-do/annual-report/>. As the information you have requested is already publicly available and easily accessible to you in another form or format, regulation 6(1)(b) of the EIRs exempts Defra from providing a copy of the information with this response to your request.

Under the SEMD loss of supply is generally reportable once 5000 properties have lost supply for more than 24 hours. Therefore it is possible for water companies to deploy bottled water but not report under SEMD. To aide and assist further, please contact Ofwat at foi@ofwat.gov.uk for their supply interruptions figures which would be more relevant to your request.

Information disclosed in response to this EIRs request is releasable to the public. In keeping with the spirit and effect of the EIRs and the government's Transparency Agenda, this letter and the information disclosed to you may be placed on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk), together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. No information identifying you will be placed on the GOV.UK website.

We attach Annex A, explaining the copyright that applies to the information being released to you, and Annex B giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact us.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted]

DWI FOIA and EIR team

dwi.enquiries@defra.gov.uk

Annex A

Copyright

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Annex B

Complaints

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 11 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Vanessa Drury, Head of Information Rights via email at InformationRequests@defra.gov.uk and they will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure is on our website.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for a decision. Please note that generally the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure.

The ICO can be contacted using the following link:

<https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/official-information-concerns-report/official-information-concern/>