



DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE

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DWI Information Letter 01/2026

12 May 2026

To: Board Level and Day to Day Contacts, Water Quality and Emergency Planning of Water and Sewerage Companies and Water Companies in England and Wales

Dear Sir/Madam

Guidance on Alternative Supply Operations 2026

Background

1. As part of the Inspectorate's operational guidance review, we have taken the opportunity to refresh the Guidance on Alternative Supply Operations and evaluate, update and incorporate as appropriate the operational practices outlined in Water UK's Technical Guidance Notes TGN11 – Storage and Use of Bottled Water and TGN12 – Tankers, Static Tanks and Bowsers.
2. The Inspectorate reminds companies that the defined points to establish wholesomeness in alternative supplies is defined in regulation 4 (3) and of their duty to monitor in accordance with regulation 6 and to the standards required in regulation 16 (15 in Wales).

Purpose

3. The purpose of this letter is to inform the water industry of the publication of the guidance on alternative supply operations. The guidance document reflects the Inspectorate's position on the means by which regulatory requirements may be met when providing emergency supplies. The guidance provides detail on risk assessment, sampling, and alternative supply disinfection practices. It also includes further information on operational procedures and training and clarifies requirements under regulation 6.

4. The purpose is also to reiterate the regulatory requirements for UKAS accreditation for sampling activities outlined within the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2016 as amended.

Revised Guidance on Alternative Water Supplies

5. The revised guidance on alternative supply operations is available on the Inspectorate's website.
6. The guidance on alternative water supply operations is relevant to all water companies including those who use third party contractors for the supply of tankers, bowsers, or Arlington tanks. Existing operations should be reviewed against this guidance to ensure that companies can demonstrate compliance with regulatory requirements.
7. The guidance on alternative water supply operations will be reviewed and revised in the light of new information. It is anticipated that this review will take place no sooner than five-year intervals unless a significant change in circumstances necessitates earlier revision.
8. The requirement to use accredited samplers for all samples taken by companies to establish compliance with their regulatory duties is long standing and is available for review in the Inspectorate's guidance to the current regulations (regulation 16 in England and regulation 15 in Wales). [Guidance on regulation 16 collection and analysis of samples](#). Particular attention is drawn to paragraphs 16.4 to 16.7, although companies should be familiar with the guidance and comply with regulatory requirements.
9. Regulation 4(3) specifies the point at which wholesomeness should be established as the Consumer's Tap, Tankers, and Bottles and Containers as outlined in [Guidance on part 3 wholesomeness](#) see paragraph 4.6 for further detail.
10. The guidance on sampling from tankers has been amended and can be found here [Guidance on part 4 monitoring of water supplies](#).
11. Any queries regarding this letter should be directed to Martin Bird, Principal Inspector.

Revocation of Information Letter 01/2022

12. With effect from the date of this letter, Information Letter 01/2022 is revoked.

This letter is being sent electronically to board level and day to day contacts. Please acknowledge receipt by email to dwi.enquiries@defra.gov.uk. Hard copies are not being sent but the letter may be freely copied.

Copies of this letter are being sent to David Henderson, Chief Executive, Water UK; Martin Woolhead, Deputy Director Water Services, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Martin Williams, Water Management Team, Welsh Government; Dave Reynolds, Drinking Water Quality Regulator for Scotland; Berni Corr, Drinking Water Inspectorate for Northern Ireland; Karen Gibbs, Catherine Jones and Mike Keil, CCW; David Beesley, Ofwat; Stewart Mounsey and Richard Thompson, Environment Agency; Nadeem Raja, Food Standards Agency and Stephen Robjohns, UK Health Security Agency.

Yours sincerely



Marcus Rink
Chief Inspector of Drinking Water