

POSITION PAPER: Regulation of bottled water when used as the public water supply

Background

On occasion water needs to be provided to customers via alternative means, including bottled waters. Water company emergency plans will have provision for the procurement and supply of bottled waters for these eventualities. There are differences between the regulations governing bottled water when provided commercially and those governing bottled water when provided as a public water supply, Water UK and the British Soft Drinks Association agree to have ongoing liaison.

This position paper has been drafted to clarify the regulations that apply when bottled waters are provided by water companies to their customers.

Regulatory position governing bottled waters when provided as public water supply

1. The Water Industry Act (1991)¹ sets the legislative context for the provision of wholesome drinking water in England and Wales². Strict standards for the quality of the public supply are laid down in national regulations for both public and private supplies that are derived from the EU Drinking Water Directive (98/83/EC)³. These standards are based on advice from the World Health Organization (WHO) and are regularly reviewed.
2. The Water Supply (Water Quality) regulations 2000 (amended 2007, 2010) stipulate the quality standards that any water supplied by water companies as a public water supply must meet to quality standards to demonstrate its wholesomeness.
3. The regulations stipulate that when water is provided by a water company that the point of compliance with drinking water quality standards is at that time that water first emerges from the tap or container.
4. As set out by Regulations 27 and 28 of the Water Supply (Water Quality) regulations 2000 (amended 2007, 2010)⁴ water companies are required to carry out risk assessments on all their supplies. This would include any bottled water providers that are to be used in case of emergency.
5. Where bottled water is used as an alternative source to mains supplied water it becomes public water supply and therefore the responsibility of the water company to demonstrate that it is compliant with drinking water regulations at the point of compliance and to have carried out appropriate risk assessments on the supply and any subsequent storage arrangements.

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1991/56/contents>

² Equivalent legislation exists in Scotland and Northern Ireland but for ease of reading this paper covers the English and Welsh situation. Please contact me if a nation specific version is required.

³ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-drink/index_en.html

⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/991/contents/made> - The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2010 apply for water companies wholly or mainly in Wales (Regs 28 and 29)

6. The Technical Guidance Note 11 issued alongside the Water UK “Principles of Water Supply Hygiene” document⁵ provides further guidance on storage, monitoring and auditing of bottled waters used by water companies.

For more information please contact DWI – www.dwi.defra.gov.uk

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⁵ <http://www.water.org.uk/home/policy/publications/archive/industry-guidance/principles-of-water-supply-hygiene>