



DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE

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SEVERN TRENT WATER LTD PLEAD GUILTY TO SUPPLYING WATER UNFIT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION

Severn Trent Water Ltd pleaded guilty, on 20 January 2014 at Coventry Magistrate's Court, to eleven counts of supplying water unfit for human consumption. The case related to the supply of water with an objectionable appearance to consumers in Broadway, Worcestershire.

The charges were brought under Section 70 of the Water Industry Act 1991 (as amended).

The Company was fined £6,000 on each of eleven counts totalling £66,000 and paid £25,950 towards prosecution costs and a £120 victim surcharge.

In response, Professor Jeni Colbourne, Chief Inspector of Drinking Water, said: *"The Inspectorate brought this case because the company didn't listen to consumers and put their health at risk as a consequence of systemic failings in its approach to safeguarding tap water quality."*

Notes to editors:

1. Section 70 of the Water Industry Act 1991 (as amended) makes it criminal offence for a water company to supply water which is unfit for human consumption. The Drinking water Inspectorate (DWI) investigates all drinking water quality events in England and Wales and will bring prosecutions if it believes that it has reliable evidence that an offence was committed, where the company does not have a defence that it took all reasonable steps and exercised all due diligence, and when such a prosecution is regarded as being in the public interest.
2. On 21st November 2012, Severn Trent Water started to receive reports of discoloured water with unusual tastes and odours coming from customers taps in the village of Broadway, Worcestershire. Despite initially assuring customers the water was safe to drink, subsequent company investigations found *E. coli* and *Cryptosporidium bovis* in the water leaving the Broadway Service reservoir (containing treated water) and at customers properties. On Friday 23rd November they advised customers not to drink the water without boiling it first, and provided bottled supplies. This advice was finally lifted and supplies were restored to normal on 3rd December 2012.

Company investigations at the treated water reservoir discovered that pipework thought to be disconnected and abandoned from a redundant spring source was still connected to the live supply system. This pipework had fractured and had been permitting surface water runoff from the surrounding area, including slurry from a nearby cattle holding area to enter the supply through the fractured pipework. The Company have since admitted to eleven charges of supplying water unfit for human consumption, an offence under Section 70 of the Water Industry Act 1991 (as amended), and have undertaken remedial works at the site to prevent a reoccurrence.

3. The Drinking Water Inspectorate was set up in January 1990. Its main task is to check that water companies in England and Wales supply wholesome drinking water and in doing so comply with the requirements of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000 (as amended).

MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

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