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Dear Colleague

DEFRA – MAJOR INCIDENT PLANNING GUIDANCE FOR WATER AND SEWERAGE

I am pleased to announce the issue of Defra major incident planning guidance for water and sewerage to the Water Companies. You will be pleased to note that this document is now de restricted and it will enable the Water Companies to incorporate this major incident planning into their capabilities for 2007.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for water companies (in England & Wales), central and regional Government and local responders, including Category 1 and 2 organisations in preparing plans to deal with Major Incidents (water and wastewater), as defined by guidance issued by the Security Service. This guidance is issued jointly by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), and the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG). This planning guidance provides a framework for a multi-agency response in the event of severe service disruptions resulting from major water and wastewater incidents. The guidance will be additional to, and support any existing national, regional and local generic command and control protocols. It does not replace any such documentation.

Section 208 of the Water Industry Act Empowers the Secretary of State to give water and sewerage undertakers Directions. These are in the interests of national security or mitigating the effects of any civil emergency. In addition, a series of Security Advice Notes are as part of the Security & Emergency Measures Directions. One of these defines two planning horizons for water companies in England and Wales. The first of these horizons enables Water Companies to identify an incident of a size such that the response is within the capabilities of the Water Company together with any mutual aid from other water companies.

Together with the Water Industry and representatives from Government Offices, Defra has developed first time generic guidance where a major water incident of a size that is greater than the response capability of the Water Company - even with any mutual aid - the planning and response for which is likely to involve a number of agencies. At the upper end of the scale, a major incident may be declared, thus implementing arrangements described in the Civil Contingencies Act and its associated guidance.

Having now received comments from yourselves and the Water Industry, final major incident planning generic guidance has been issued to the Water Companies, and they will be contacting yourselves in due course to develop their plans.

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If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Yours sincerely

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Local response gateway: preparing together