
Terms of reference of review of freeze/thaw incidents

Ofwat will review the recent significant water supply issues customers experienced in England and Wales during the recent freeze and thaw. The review will look at the causes of the problems and the response of water companies.

The aim of the review is to:

- Establish what happened and set out clear lessons learned for improvement. The review will draw out good and bad performance so good practice can be shared and built on and customers get a better service and less disruption in the future.
- Consider whether customers affected have received appropriate compensation from water companies.

We would expect companies to learn from the review's findings and implement the recommendations. The review will also consider whether there is any evidence that a company may have breached any of its statutory obligations or licence conditions, and therefore if Ofwat needs to investigate that further to decide if any enforcement action is required.

The review will cover:

1. **Assessment.** A thorough assessment of the issues or problems that arose, what caused them and their impact on customers.
2. **Planning and preparation.** Did companies have advance knowledge or insight into problem areas in their networks that might be adversely impacted by the weather conditions experienced? What did companies do proactively in advance of the freeze/thaw to prepare themselves and customers and to mitigate risks? Were emergency plans in place and adequate to cope with the problems and had lessons been learned from previous incidents? Were those emergency plans appropriately enacted?
3. **Handling of incidents.** What did companies do to deploy resources to deal with problems including distribution of bottled water, speed and effectiveness of repairs, management oversight and governance?

4. **Communication and support.** How well companies communicated with customers and stakeholders during the incidents and their identification of, and support for, vulnerable customers.
5. **Ongoing support.** How customers are being looked after now, particularly whether companies have proactively provided fair and speedy compensation.

We will be requesting information from water companies and will be seeking input from other relevant bodies, community and business representatives and from customers who were directly affected. We will work with the Consumer Council for Water during the review and liaise with Defra and Welsh Government throughout.

We will publish our conclusions by 15 June 2018.