

## Review of freeze/thaw incidents – Dee Valley Water

26 April 2018

Dear Rachel

1. We were pleased that our customers in the Dee Valley area were relatively unaffected by the freeze/thaw period we experienced, which was less severe than some other areas of the country. While some customers unfortunately did experience supply interruptions – for which we are very sorry – none were impacted for more than five and a half hours.
2. Our supply area experienced below freezing conditions at the end of February 2018, with the maximum temperature then increasing from just below 0°C on 1 March to around 9°C four days later. In line with our normal winter preparedness arrangements, we took a number of actions to prepare for the cold weather and thaw. This included deferring the initiation of new programmed work on our network that might be difficult to cease at short notice, and checking a number of key stock levels (for example, of repair fittings).
3. The freeze/thaw period resulted in an increase in pipe bursts between 2 and 9 March, and an associated increase in leakage from our system of around 40%. Customers at 328 properties (0.26% of the total we serve) faced some loss of supply over this period as a direct, localised consequence of 10 mains bursts.
4. We take very seriously any disruption to our customers' supplies, and sought to restore supplies as rapidly as possible. For around two thirds of affected customers, supplies were restored within three hours. No customers experienced an interruption of longer than five and half hours. No vulnerable customers, or business customers for whom a water supply is critical, were affected by supply interruptions. Given the limited extent of the supply interruptions experienced, no compensation payments have been necessary.
5. While our area experienced significant temperature changes over the freeze/thaw period, those changes were less rapid than experienced in some other parts of the UK, and the circumstances that arose did not result in our incident trigger levels being reached. Given this, we operated on a business as usual basis throughout, in line with our established winter preparedness plans.
6. Had an incident been triggered we would have responded in line with our incident management plans and procedures. We would have mobilised a more extensive response capability accordingly, including a 24/7 communications team to allow for effective proactive and reactive engagement with our customers and with wider stakeholders. In practice, though, we were able to address the supply issues that arose during the freeze/thaw period through our normal operations in a timely and effective manner.

7. We seek to learn from circumstances such as these. Met Office warnings proved an effective weather-based trigger in terms of management of the issues we faced in this freeze/thaw period. We recognise, though, that the temperature increase – and thaw – from freezing experienced in our supply area was less rapid than that experienced in some other parts of the country. Experience from other areas highlights the case for developing an additional weather-based trigger reflecting the risks associated with significant temperature differentials within a short period of time (e.g. a rapid thaw). We will be assessing ways in which we might enhance our incident management preparedness to assist with management of these risks as part of the integration programme within Severn Trent Water plc. That programme will align our incident management procedures and plans with those of Severn Trent Water, with this allowing for further enhancements to the ways in which Group resources can be mobilised in response to incidents.
  
8. We welcome the opportunity afforded by Ofwat's review to draw upon sector-wide learning from those areas that faced more severe conditions over the freeze/thaw period. The attached report provides our responses to Ofwat's freeze/thaw review questions.

Yours sincerely,

**Liv Garfield**

**Chief Executive**