

Centre City Tower, 7 Hill Street, Birmingham B5 4UA
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By email -

January 2023

Dear,

December freeze-thaw

I am writing to you regarding the mid-December 2022 freeze thaw event, and your company's preparations for and response to it.

We know that freeze-thaw events can pose a significant risk to the integrity of companies' water supply assets. At the same time, these events occur with a certain degree of regularity and predictability, and all companies should have robust plans in place to mitigate the risks these events pose.

We want to understand how well companies' assets performed during the freeze-thaw event and whether an appropriate level of resilience was demonstrated. We also have concerns that some companies may have failed to support their customers in the manner we would expect.

I would welcome a response to this letter, setting out:

- a) Details of the impact of the freeze thaw in your company area, including: underlying causes of any impacts; numbers of properties and customers experiencing problems; length of time to resolve outages; etc.
- b) A full and candid explanation of your company's response to any impacts, including: communication with customers; mutual aid with other companies; distributions of bottled water; and identification of vulnerable customers and the support provided for them.
- c) Arrangements for compensation to impacted customers.

- d) Lessons learned from this experience and changes you intend to implement; and whether lessons learned from the 2018 freeze-thaw and recommendations from Ofwat's Out In The Cold review have been implemented.

We also expect many companies will be commissioning their own independent reviews, and I expect the findings of these to be shared with us. Understanding these points will allow us to assess the sector's current state of resilience for these types of events. Where we believe that companies – individually or collectively – have let customers down, we will consider what further action should be taken. We recognise that there are some companies where the impact on customers of this incident was relatively limited and therefore a shorter response will be acceptable.

Please provide your response by Tuesday 28 February. It should be sent to customerfocus@ofwat.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

John Russell
Senior Director, Strategy, Finance and Infrastructure