

*The Water Regulations Advisory Scheme*

# ANNUAL REPORT

April 2006 to March 2007



**WRAS**  
*Water Regulations Advisory Scheme*

**Front Cover: Backflow risk from a storage cistern.**

The submerged inlet of the float valve risks backflow of the contaminated water from the uncovered storage cistern into the supply pipe, to emerge elsewhere as someone's drinking water. The valve failed to shut at the correct water level because two milk cartons had been used instead of the proper float.

Price of a correct replacement float: 50p.

Photograph by kind permission of *plumbing* magazine.

# **THE WATER REGULATIONS ADVISORY SCHEME**

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### **SUMMARY**

In addition to the routine work of the Scheme in a busy year, on behalf of the UK Water Suppliers WRAS prepared a review of the Water Fittings Regulations and a response to the public consultation on measures to improve the efficiency of use of water for domestic purposes, benefiting from the considerable experience of the Water Suppliers' Regulations Managers and their staff. Promotion of the regulations continued by presentations, magazine articles and publication of several advisory leaflets. Demand for WRAS Approval of products increased slightly, possibly boosted by the wider access to the on-line Water Fittings and Materials Directory. During the year WRAS said farewell to Bob Baty, its long-standing Chairman of the Management Committee, and welcomed the new Chairman, Stephen Kay, and several new members of the Committee. The Water Industry Approved Plumbers Scheme increased its membership by some 12% and negotiated with trade associations to offer specialised sectors of membership.

- 1 Review of the Water Fittings Regulations**
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## **1 Review of the Water Fittings Regulations**

The review of the Regulations and Schedules which commenced at the end of 2005 was completed in two stages by the Working Group and Water Suppliers views on the proposals were sought in a consultation in the Autumn. The Management Committee approved a final report in November 2006, which in addition to many detailed suggestions for amendments to technical clauses, called for notification of contamination risks such as greywater and rainwater systems and domestic fire sprinklers. On the broader strategic issues, it proposed statutory registration of installers of water fittings or, failing this, the incorporation of the multiple Approved Contractors Schemes into a single national scheme, and called for control of compliance of water fittings at the point of sale.

Presentation of the report to Defra was postponed because of the impending public consultation on measures to improve efficiency of the use of water for domestic purposes, which were thought likely to have significant implications for the Water Fittings Regulations. WRAS represented the Water Suppliers on the Government working group which prepared the public consultation. When the proposals were published in December, a WRAS review group prepared a response for Water Suppliers from the Regulations' perspective. After endorsement by Water Suppliers this was submitted in March. The practical achievability of the proposal for a 'whole building' target for water efficiency was questioned, with Water Suppliers preferring the alternative of efficiency performance requirements for individual types of water fittings. WRAS again called for point-of-sale control of compliance of fittings, to include water efficiency requirements.

## **2 Liaison on behalf of Water Suppliers**

In addition to the reviews conducted, WRAS undertook liaison on behalf of the Water Suppliers in regard to the Government's proposals for cheap domestic fire sprinkler systems, where the concern was that the low-cost design could compromise water quality, backflow protection, metering and pressure requirements. A Government report was awaited giving details of a research project into the design of the system but, at the request of the Water Suppliers, a rider was to be added cautioning against its adoption until the Water Supply Industry's concerns have been resolved.

The Water Suppliers views were presented to the British Standards Institute committee which revised the standard for the design, installation, testing and maintenance of services supplying water for domestic use within buildings and their curtilages, BS6700:2006. The Scheme Manager represented the interests of the users of water inside buildings in the meetings of the Water UK Standards Board which manages the representation and funding of standards work throughout the Water Supply Industry.

## **3 Interpretation and enforcement of the Regulations**

Representatives of Water Suppliers attended the Technical Support Group meetings to exchange their experience of enforcing regulations, to seek common interpretations and to highlight issues of interpretation for the attention of the Technical Committee.

The Technical Committee initiated a working group to prepare guidance for Water Suppliers on their preparation of the fourth element of the Drinking Water Safety Plan relating to water distribution within premises. This would draw upon the expertise of Regulations specialists in the assessment and amelioration of risks affecting the quality of drinking water.

The implementation of the guidance previously developed on wholesite and zone backflow protection was the subject of discussions at the Technical and Management Committee, which asked WRAS to undertake a survey amongst Water Suppliers of progress with its implementation and present a confidential report for Water Suppliers to use for benchmarking their enforcement, if they wish.

#### 4 Promoting and advising on the Regulations

Presentations were made by WRAS about its work and the application of the Regulations to trade associations, manufacturers of fittings, contractors, and water suppliers. Articles were prepared for publication in journals and books, including the bi-monthly WRAS column in *plumbing* magazine for the Institute of Plumbing and Health Engineering. WRAS supported a new publication aimed at graduating students of plumbing colleges with articles and advertising for the Water Fittings and Materials Directory and Approved Contractors Schemes.

The WRAS Technical Advice service answered questions from several thousands of enquirers who sought information about the Regulations by telephone, letter and e-mail. WRAS was consulted by many organisations including Government departments, trade associations, training organisations, fittings manufacturers, designers and installers on the compliance of water fittings and the requirements of the Regulations.

The Regulations assessment process undertaken by Logic Certification and NIC Certification was evaluated on behalf of the Technical Committee, which approved joint WRAS/Logic and WRAS/NIC Certificates of Water Regulations Knowledge for award to successful candidates.

#### 5 WRAS Approval of products and materials

Demand continued for WRAS Approval of fittings and materials. The Test and Assessment Group which undertakes the assessment and approval on behalf of Water Suppliers met eight times during the year. The membership was increased by one to seven to allow for the unavoidable absence of members due to other commitments. WRAS is grateful to Water Suppliers for permitting their staff to undertake this valuable service to the industry, which also increases the members' knowledge of water fittings and compliance issues. The annual total of products approved increased slightly, as shown in the Table 1:

Products approved	Year						
	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07
Fittings	717	580	748	658	750	825	904
Materials	243	227	264	223	200	353	320
Total	960	707	1012	881	950	1178	1224

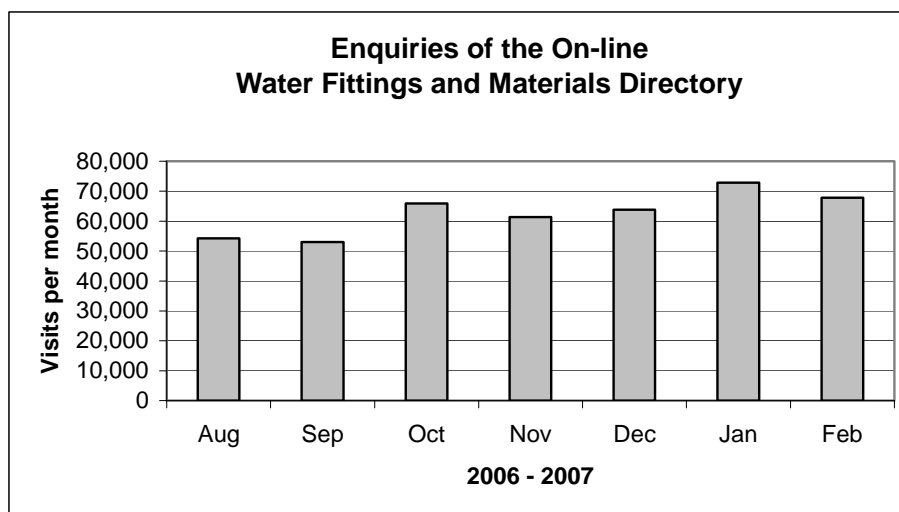
**Table 1: Annual numbers of products approved by WRAS**

As well as giving approval to fittings, the Test and Assessment Group provides interpretation of the Regulations to manufacturers with novel products and gives acceptance in principle of design arrangements, to assist in the development of new products.

During the year, to assist manufacturers and test laboratories in the preparation and assessment of applications for WRAS Approval, Guidance was prepared covering the selection of samples, the use of approved components and materials, the acceptability of alternative performance criteria and other aspects of testing and approving products. At a workshop in February this Guidance was presented to representatives of the materials and mechanical testing laboratories and its provisions are being introduced, with a lead-in period over the coming months where necessary.

In 2005 the Water Fittings and Materials Directory was made available free of charge on the WRAS website, replacing the hard-copy book which had been published twice yearly. The Directory continues to be a vital reference for Water Suppliers' inspectors, manufacturers, designers, specifiers and installers of plumbing fittings.

Use of the Directory has increased steadily (Figure 1), with visits to the site peaking at over 4,000 per day and in the last three months the rate of use approached 1,000,000 visits per year.



**Figure 1: Monthly visits to the Water Fittings and Materials Directory on-line**

In contrast, when published as a book, WRAS sold approximately 600 copies of each edition. Making it available on the internet has undoubtedly increased access to, and use of, the Directory and should encourage the use of approved products, which will benefit compliance and Water Suppliers' inspectors who check plumbing systems in premises.

## **6 Publications**

Booklets were published giving advice on the application of the Regulations to stables and to railway premises. The need for these arose from enforcement disputes in which WRAS was asked to mediate or provide interpretations and were welcomed by trade representatives. WRAS provided 1,000 copies of the stables booklet to the British Horse Society for distribution to its members.

In response to backflow incidents involving the provision of fresh water to ships in ports, Information and Guidance Notes were published for filling ships with water in large ports and filling pleasure craft in inland and coastal marinas.

The UK Water Treatment Association, a trade group for manufacturers of water treatment equipment for use in premises, prompted the Scheme to prepare an Information and Guidance Note on the selection and installation of water softeners and assisted in its preparation.

Information leaflets were published on the Scheme's website dealing with

- contamination issues affecting the use of flexible hoses made from the elastomeric material EPDM,
- with backflow risks arising from the design of compact bathrooms in modern houses and
- with the selection and installation of drinking water coolers.

Distribution of other publications continued and sales of the Water Regulations Guide were maintained, with the income from approximately 10,000 copies sold during the year being used to support the work of the Scheme.

## **7 Management Committee**

The Management Committee sets the policy and monitors the overall performance of the Scheme. After more than ten years with WRAS and the preceding Water Byelaws Scheme, Mr Bob Baty chaired his last Management Committee meeting in June before his retirement from

South West Water Services. Members thanked him for his very valuable work for and on behalf of the industry's Scheme and presented him with a framed print as a memento of his service.

In August Mr Stephen Kay, Managing Director of Cambridge Water plc, accepted the chairmanship. Mr Patrick Heaton-Armstrong, Chief Executive of the Isle of Man Water Authority, retired during the year and was replaced by his successor, Mr. John Smith. Mr Roger Harrington (Bournemouth and West Hampshire Water plc) joined the Committee. Other members were

Mr G Aitkenhead [Scottish Water]  
Mr W Duddy [Northern Ireland Water Service], replacing Mr P Barker  
Mr G Franklin, [Managing Director, WRc-NSF Ltd],  
Mr D Harker, [Anglian Water]  
Mr C Haysome, [Yorkshire Water plc]  
Mr P Henderson [Welsh Water]  
Mr P Seeley [Mid Kent Water plc]  
Mr G Tute, [Southern Water], Chairman, Technical Committee  
Mr P Wakeford [Thames Water Utilities]  
with Mr. P Jiggins [DEFRA] attending as an Observer.  
Mr Graham Mays continued to serve as Secretary to the Committee.

## **8 Approved Contractors Schemes**

At the request of Defra, the Scheme Manager chairs the national coordinating group for the eight Approved Contractors Schemes. This group has established common requirements for entry to the various schemes, a national question bank for use in assessments of regulations knowledge and has surveyed the benefits of membership of the various schemes. Concern was expressed to government during the year about confusion amongst training colleges and plumbers arising from publicity for Competent Persons Schemes for self-certification of compliance with the Building Regulations. The Government was strongly urged not to consider disbanding Approved Contractors Schemes in favour of Competent Persons Schemes, in view of the differences in scope of the two schemes, which relate to the Water Fittings Regulations and Building Regulations respectively, and the continuing growth in membership of the Approved Contractors Schemes which resulted from the hard work put into recruitment by their organisers.

The WRAS-administered Water Industry Approved Plumbers Scheme (WIAPS) continued to expand its membership with an annual growth of 12%, ending the year with 5,750 members. Plans neared completion for WIAPS to offer some trade associations membership of additional specialist sectors so that their installers could undertake work of defined and restricted scope as approved contractors.

## **9 WRAS Staff at Oakdale**

The administration of the Scheme was provided by staff of WRcNSF Ltd. under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Management Committee, including technical advice, interpretation of regulations and standards, advice about testing and administration of membership of WIAPS. WRAS relies on the technical expertise and enthusiasm of the staff at Oakdale, some of whom work exclusively for the Scheme and others who undertake Scheme business as well as other duties.