

PRESS RELEASE



16 December 2015

PORTSMOUTH WATER RAISING AWARENESS OF THE RISK TO PUBLIC DRINKING WATER SUPPLIES FROM DOMESTIC HEATING OIL STORAGE

Over the past ten years local water supplier, Portsmouth Water, has experienced an increasing number of pollution incidents related to the storage of domestic heating oil in the more rural areas of Hampshire and West Sussex. These spillages can be caused by old and faulty tanks, actual/attempted theft, and poor condition or location of tank pipework.

The water used for public water supply within the Portsmouth Water area is all sourced from the Chalk aquifers that are found in this area, via boreholes, springs and the groundwater-fed River Itchen.

If groundwater becomes polluted it is extremely difficult, and sometimes impossible, to clean it up to its original quality. In the extreme it can lead to Portsmouth Water shutting down sources used for public water supply. There are also environmental risks concerning damage to the many protected areas, such as the South Downs National Park and the Chichester and Langstone Harbours.

In response to this ongoing risk, Portsmouth Water has been running an awareness campaign for the past 3 years. Despite this, within weeks of last year's awareness campaign, Portsmouth Water again experienced a significant oil spill related to the storage of domestic heating oil at a property in very close proximity to a crucial public water supply well. The pipework associated with the storage tank had corroded and subsequently ruptured from an increase in pressure, following the tank being refilled for the winter season. This resulted in nearly 2000 litres of kerosene being released to ground and, consequently, an important drinking water source being put out of operation for 12 months.

In addition, the land owner has had to experience significant excavation and ground investigations at their property for many months to remedy the spillage. Fortunately, the homeowner's insurance covered this work, as the final sum for this work has been significant.

Rod Porteous, Engineering Director at Portsmouth Water, said "We kindly ask our customers that if they store and use heating oil on their property, that they remain vigilant with regards to their heating oil storage tanks and associated pipework. As some accidents can occur despite preventative measures being taken, we also urge that they check with their insurance companies that they are covered with regards to losses of heating oil, as some remedial costs could potentially reach into the hundreds of thousands of pounds."

To view the awareness campaign leaflet or for advice on what to do in the event of an oil spillage at your property please visit our website and click on the Water Quality heading for further information.

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Notes to Editors

Website: www.portsmouthwater.co.uk
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Portsmouth Water is one of the oldest water companies in the country, having been incorporated in 1857. We are proud sponsors of Portsmouth in Bloom, EBP Schools Science Fair, Staunton Country Park and Water Aid.

Our Water Sources

Our water, of high quality, is derived from the chalk of the South Downs and is abstracted from wells, boreholes, springs and the River Itchen. The Springs at Havant and Bedhampton are thought to be the largest group of springs used for public supplies in Europe.

Statistics

We serve 307,000 homes and businesses in an area covering 868 square kilometres (335 square miles) from the River Meon in Hampshire to the River Arun in West Sussex.

Every day we supply around 175 million litres of water to a population of over 692,000 people at the lowest cost in England and Wales.

Our Distribution Network

Water is supplied to our customers through a network of over 3,200 kilometres (1,990 miles) of underground water mains and more than 300,000 individual service connections, all of which are continuously maintained by our distribution staff.