



## WaPUG SPRING MEETING 1995

### DG5 - An Ofwat Perspective

Peter Tootill, BSc, CEng, MICE, MIMgt  
Head of Levels of Service  
Office of Water Services  
7 Hill Street, Birmingham B5 4UA.

#### 1. Intro

- a. Ofwat's concern is from the customer's perspective  
*This is not always the same as the company's perspective. A customer doesn't care why he or she suffers poor service. The fact of that poor service is what matters. The company thinks about whether it is their 'fault' and can they reasonably do anything about it.*
- b. DG5 in context of DG1-9  
*We have a range of indicators of service to customers. DG5 is only one of the set. We'd like more for sewerage but it's difficult to see what else we could measure. We are committed to using 'output measures' so things like sewer condition and lengths renewed (whilst valuable background) are not appropriate.*
- c. What do customers want from sewers?  
*Only that their sewage goes away never to return...*

#### 2. The history of DG5

- a. Original DOE definition (R.Dudding letter of 21 August 1989)  
*This is closer to the present definition than some Companies seem to believe but it was confused in some respects.*
- b. Changes since then  
*We have put more emphasis on the 'at risk' aspect to identify customers with the highest risk and the worst problems and worked hard to make it as clear as possible - not always successfully. We have also tried to make it clear that DG5 is about frequency of flooding, not how hard it rains.*
- c. Why 2 in 10?  
*Why indeed - it's a pretty poor level of service.*

**3. The future of DG5**

a. New band of 1 in 10

*To take account of 2.c above and to extend coverage of service measured. Will eventually mean we get better quality information as it is easier to assess whether a property is at risk once in ten years than twice*

b. More detailed incident information

*We will collect more detailed information on flooding incidents. These are more important to customers than mere risk. This will also help with assessing sewer serviceability.*

c. External flooding

*We'd like to include external flooding, at least in the longer term. It can still be a major problem to a customer - wading through a foot of dilute sewage to get to your front door is not nice. However, if it's at the end of a long garden, it's less of a problem. Getting a clear, unambiguous definition is one stumbling block here.*

**4. Assessing risk**

*There are various ways of assessing risk of flooding. Fifty years' comprehensive records would be nice but...*

a. Modelling

*This is very valuable but needs careful interpretation by an experienced sewerage engineer.*

b. Incidents and complaints

*Obviously important. Complements modelling and should be used to verify models.*

**5. Discussion**

*Over to you...*

WaPUG Spring Meeting 3rd May 1995 International Convention Centre Birmingham

Session 1- Chairman Richard Long Acer Consultants Ltd

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Peter Tootill

OFWAT

Question David Beale DHV

You have only talked about levels of service with respect to flooding why are there no standards associated with surcharge causing restricted toilet use etc. ?

Answer

The original DG Indicator included restricted toilet use but it proved very difficult to assess and was dropped. It has not been raised by customers as an issue in market research nor by companies during consultation over revisions to the indicators.

When we review the indicators (which is likely to be in the run up to the next periodic review) we expect to look at other areas. External flooding has been suggested as one possibility but it is likely to be difficult to produce a clear definition that will be consistently reported on by companies.

Question Martin Shaw Nuflow Systems

Has anyone told the customers that sewers are in a poor shape and on the point of collapse ? We have some of the best technology in the world but are doing anything. Should OFWAT not be doing something ?

Answer

We monitor the serviceability of the system rather than its condition. This is what is more important to customers. However, the recent SBP submissions did contain information on the physical condition of sewers and we will be able to assess how this has changed at the next periodic review. Any action will depend on the scale of changes and the impact on the serviceability of the assets.

Question Paul Davies Engineering Control Systems

Are you happy with saying that twice in 10 years is the same as once in 5 years for flooding ? Do you accept that 1 in 10 year flooding may not be caused by 1 in 10 year rainfall and yet models are run with 1 in 10 year rainfall storms ?

Answer

If something happens on average once in a five year period, it will happen twice in a ten year period and vice versa. The key point is this is an average over a long period. A property that hasn't flooded for five years may still be at risk of flooding twice in ten years.

The return period of flooding is not necessarily the same as the return period of the storm that caused it - other things such as preceding conditions are relevant. Ideally, good historical records combined with modelling will enable the risk of flooding to be assessed. However, good records are not always available and modelling is an art rather than a science. Modellers should use their expertise and whatever information they have to assess risk and Ofwat will normally accept their advice, subject to any comments the reporter may have.