

PR3494dr2

28<sup>th</sup> September 2001

## **Making Sense of Water Industry Approvals**

**By Julia Trew, WRc**

***Julia Trew, of international water and environment consultant WRc, is manager of the 'WRc Approved' scheme. Here she explains the different regulations and approval schemes for new products in the water industry.***

Manufacturers developing a new product for the water industry must ensure that it complies with the appropriate regulations and approval schemes. Whether the product is a new pipe fitting or a water sampling device, without such approvals it will lack credibility and competitive standing in the market place. However, there is often confusion over which approvals are needed. This is compounded by the mistaken terminology frequently used to describe both the approvals and the products they are intended to regulate. Terms such as 'Water Board Approved' actually mean very little, though they may carry considerable weight with those who are not familiar with the main approval schemes.

### **Key Legislation**

The crucial pieces of legislation are the Water Supply (*Water Quality*) Regulations (1989), with subsequent Amendments up to and including 2001, and the Water Supply (*Water Fittings*) Regulations (1999). The key is that the *Water Quality Regulations* deal with products used *on the water company's side of the water supply system* – in the treatment and delivery of water by the water company to the customer's property. The *Water Fittings Regulations* cover products used *on the consumer's side* – to move and manage water once it is on consumers' property, that is, not in pipework owned by the water company.

### ***Water Quality Regulations***

The *Water Quality Regulations*, and their Amendments, regulate the provision of water by the privatised water companies. Regulation 25 of the legislation covers products used by the water companies in public water supplies and swimming pools. Approvals under Regulation 25 are granted by the

, following assessment of products by the Drinking Water Inspectorate's (DWI) Committee on Products and Processes for use in Public Water Supply (CPP). However, that assessment is limited to the effect of a product on water quality; compliance with the regulation does not imply the product's fitness for purpose.

The type of assessment tests conducted will depend both on what the product is made of, and the area of the product that contacts the water. If it is deemed so small that water quality is unlikely to be affected, products are required to meet BS7766 (metallic) or BS 6920 (non-metallic). They must be listed in the 'Water Fittings and Materials Directory' (described later in this article).

Examples of low contact area products approved for use under the Regulations include: valves, gaskets, jointing compounds and sealants, water meters, in situ sensors and probes and hydrants. The full list of approved products is available at the DWI website, [www.dwi.detr.gov.uk](http://www.dwi.detr.gov.uk) or Part 4 of the 'Water Fittings and Materials Directory'.

Obtaining approval under Regulation 25 can be long, complex and costly, but help is available from WRc or the DWI - CPP.

### *Water Fittings Regulations*

Replacing the former Water Byelaws, *the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999* require products used on the consumers' side of the water supply to be of "an appropriate quality and standard". One means of demonstrating this, is through Water Regulations Advisory Scheme (WRAS) Approval. Like the *Water Quality Regulations*, neither these Regulations nor WRAS Approval guarantee a product's fitness for purpose.

The tests fall into two main categories: those examining the product's effect on water quality for contamination; and mechanical tests – for preventing waste, misuse and undue consumption of water. Staff at WRc-NSF's Evaluation and Testing Centre will advise on appropriate tests for individual products from a prescribed list.

Non-metallic materials in products will be tested against BS 6920. As well as testing for effects on water quality, BS 6920 tests for taste, appearance, growth of aquatic organisms, leaching of metals, and cytotoxicity. These tests, which can be

conducted at any of four accredited centres in the UK, must be completed before moving on to mechanical testing at the evaluation centre in Oakdale. The mechanical tests, though product-specific, might comprise pressure and vacuum tests, temperature cycling, or high temperature endurance tests.

Information on the scheme is available on the WRAS web site at [www.wras.co.uk](http://www.wras.co.uk).

## WRc Approved

In addition to statutory approval, a growing number of manufacturers are seeking technical endorsement of their products to help them stand out from the crowd. 'WRc Approved', which is an independent technical view on the fitness of a product for the purpose claimed, provides just that.

It is not a statutory requirement, like the *Water Quality* and *Water Fittings* regulations, and it is not related to them, although there is often confusion, due to WRc's involvement in them. Products have been mistakenly labelled as 'WRc Approved' when they have actually been tested under the *Water Fittings Regulations* – albeit by WRc!

'WRc Approved' was launched in 1996, to offer manufacturers a way of demonstrating product performance, and it is relevant to any water or wastewater product or service. Products submitted for approval undergo rigorous assessment by WRc against either an existing technical specification or, often in the case of novel products, a specifically drafted assessment schedule. Thus the WRc Approved logo has become an important quality mark in the industry.

## **Water Fittings and Materials Directory**

The 'Water Fittings and Materials Directory' is the only publication combining details of all of the schemes discussed here. In addition to a host of useful information, it contains separate, comprehensive listings for:

- water fittings, appliances and materials tested and approved under the *Water Fittings Regulations* (WRAS Approved);

- products and services certified 'WRc Approved'; and
- products and materials approved under the *Water Quality Regulations* by DWI for contact use with public water supplies.

It lists all materials complying with BS 6920 in Part 2, and those complying with the *Water Fittings Regulations* in Part 1. The Directory is available in paper or CD ROM format from WRAS, on 01495 248454.

## **Conclusion**

Water industry regulations are necessarily complex to protect and maintain public safety, but the organisations mentioned in this article have a wealth of experience in standards and approvals, and most are willing to provide information or advice. Finding a way through the maze of small print may look like a daunting process, but it is one that manufacturers ignore at their peril.

**-ends-**

**1027 words**

**For further information please contact:**

At the Agency:

**Kathryn Stubbings**  
**IMS Public Relations**  
**Tel: +44 (0)1672 520788**  
**Fax: +44 (0)1672 520789**

At the Client:

**Julia Trew**  
**WRc plc**  
**Tel: +44 (0)1793 865000**  
**Fax: +44 (0)1793 865001**

Editors Notes

## ***About WRc***

WRc is a leading provider of solutions for water, waste and the environment. For over 70 years WRc has been providing independent consultancy, research services and software products to utilities, suppliers, industry, regulators, the EU and Governments world-wide.