



EPA Bathing Water Guidance Note on the Management of Pre-season Bathing Water Samples in the Implementation of the 2008 Bathing Water Quality Regulations

Management and Reporting of Pre-season Bathing Water Samples

Each year a pre-season sample is required to be taken at each identified bathing water prior to the start of the bathing season (1 June) as per Schedule 2 of the 2008 Bathing Water Quality (BWQ) Regulations whereby 'one sample is to be taken shortly before the start of each bathing season'.

The pre-season sample is to be taken account of and analysed along with no fewer than four samples per bathing season as per the BWQ Regulations. As the pre-season sample forms part of the legislative assessment dataset, the pre-season sample is managed and reported in the same manner as the in-season samples in terms of:

- reporting of scheduled samples prefixed in the monitoring calendars,
- applying 4-day window to allow for safe sampling,
- applying bathing restrictions
- allowing sample replacement where STP requirements have been followed
- allowing suspension of monitoring calendar where an abnormal situation applies, and
- being part of the annual water quality assessment dataset.

An exception is that only one pre-season sample is to be reported for assessment purposes to the EC as 'taking more samples before the bathing season could be over-influential and affect the result of the assessment' (ETC/ICM, 2012). Schedule 2 of the BWQ Regulations does not define a time limit for the taking of the pre-season sample shortly before the bathing season. However, a practice of using a 10-day period prior to the start of the bathing season for the taking of the pre-season sample was endorsed by Member States (ETC/ICM, 2012). Hence local authorities are only allowed to schedule one pre-season sample for each bathing water during the pre-season sampling period 22 – 31 May in the monitoring calendars in the Bathing Water Information System (BWIS).

A communication from the European Topic Centre on Inland, Coastal & Marine Waters (November, 2017) informs that the pre-season sample is taken to determine the 'general state' of the bathing water before the bathing season and that the most recent pre-season sample should be used and reported for assessment purposes. Situations could arise whereby an early warning is not applied under the terms of STP requirements and bacterial levels of the pre-season sample are elevated requiring a bathing restriction at the bathing water or bacterial levels are elevated above normal levels (though not requiring a restriction).

In these situations, where additional sampling is undertaken by the local authority during the pre-season sampling period (22 – 31 May) to monitor the bathing water quality, the most recent sample taken during the pre-season period will be used and reported for assessment purposes in lieu of the earlier pre-season sample scheduled in the monitoring calendar. Where such situations arise, time is needed by local authorities to mitigate the cause of the contamination and allow for additional sampling

prior to start of the bathing season (1 June) and hence local authorities would be advised to take their pre-season scheduled sample early in the pre-season sampling period.

To recap

- Local authorities are to report **one** pre-season sample in the monitoring calendar for each identified bathing water in BWIS.
- Only one pre-season sample will be used and reported for **assessment** purposes.
- Local authorities are advised to take their pre-season scheduled sample **early** in the pre-season sampling period (22 – 31 May) to allow for the need of possible additional sampling prior to the start of the bathing season.
- **4-day** window to allow for safe sampling applies to pre-season sample.
- **STP** and abnormal situation requirements can apply to pre-season sample.
- Bathing **restrictions** and recommendations as per HSE Action Thresholds apply to pre-season samples.
- **Generally**, the one pre-season sample prefixed in the monitoring calendar will be used and reported for assessment purposes.
- Where situations arise whereby the bacterial levels of the pre-season scheduled sample are elevated, additional sampling undertaken by the local authority to monitor the bathing water quality prior to the start of the bathing season may be used **in lieu of** pre-season scheduled sample for assessment purposes.
- In certain situations, the **most recent** sample taken prior to the start of the bathing season (1 June) will be used and reported for assessment purposes in lieu of the earlier pre-season sample scheduled in the monitoring calendar.

References

- Bathing Water Quality Regulations 2008, SI No 79 of 2008
- European Topic Centre Inland, coastal, marine waters (ETC/ICM) 2012, Issues Paper on monitoring and assessment under the 2006 Bathing Water Directive. Bathing Water Committee Meeting 28.9.2012 Update
- European Topic Centre on Inland, coastal, marine waters (2017), Communication dated 14 November 2017.