

Q & A

Requirements for publishing pollution monitoring data

February 2013

Q What are licence limits?

A Licence limits are the minimum or maximum values permitted for pollutants discharged under an environmental protection licence.

Q Why does Sydney Water have them?

A Limits define the levels of pollutants permitted in discharges from Sydney Water's treatment plants.

Q Can a sample exceed its licence limit value without breaching the licence?

A Within a licence for each pollutant listed by the EPA, it will have a limit value. This value may be a 100 percentile limit where samples must meet the limit value 100% of the time. Or for other pollutants lower percentile limits may be assigned. Where there are limit values lower than a 100% limit a sample or samples test results can exceed the limit value. For example, if a 90 percentile limit is assigned to a pollutant, this means 90% of collected samples should meet the limit value. If 10 samples are required in a year only one sample of the ten samples for the year is allowed to exceed the 90 percentile limit value. If more than one sample exceeds this value this would be a non-compliance of the licence conditions.

Q What happens if we exceed licence limits?

A If licence limits are exceeded more times than permitted under a licence, we report these non-compliances to the NSW EPA.

Q What has changed with this new reporting?

A This new reporting requirement means that for the first time monthly summaries of pollution monitoring data under environmental pollution licences must be published on the web within 14 days of the sample data being obtained.

Raw data collected under environmental protection licences must also be provided within 14 days of a request.

Q Why has it changed?

A Changes in the Protection of Environment Operations Act (POEO Act), now require licensees with a public website to publish monthly summaries of pollution monitoring data within 14 days of the data being obtained.

Q When did it change?

A The NSW EPA issued new requirements for publishing pollution monitoring data in March 2012. Licensees are required to meet these new requirements by publishing monthly summaries of data obtained from 1 April 2012 on their websites by 1 July 2012.

Q Why are they different for each plant?

A Sydney Water has a number of environmental protection licences and the limits and pollutants specified for each plant have been determined depending on a number of factors such as the technology used to treat discharges and the type of receiving environment.

Q Why aren't all the reports published at the same time?

A The requirement is that data is published within 14 days of obtaining the data. Sydney Water samples its discharges at different times so therefore data is obtained on different days during the month and is published according to its availability to meet the 14 day timeframe.

Q What if I want more information?

A If you want more information, email Sydney Water at epareports@sydneywater.com.au.

Q What is Sydney Water doing to protect the environment?

A Our treatment plants are run to minimise impacts on the environment, with ongoing benefit to our customers and the community. To find out more about recent initiatives and outcomes see our Annual Report web page at <http://elogin.ads.swc/SW/about-us/our-publications/annual-report/index.htm>. Our Sewage Treatment System Impact Monitoring web page at <http://elogin.ads.swc/SW/water-the-environment/how-we-manage-sydney-s-water/waterquality/stsimp-reports/index.htm> also provides information on the impact of discharges to the waterways of Sydney.