



Northern Ireland Environment Agency
Gníomhaireacht Comhshaoil Thuaisceart Éireann
Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Our Reference: DAERA/26-179

██████████ via email
████████████████████████████████████████

13 April 2026

Water Catchment Unit

NIEA Lisburn

17 Antrim Road

Tonagh

Lisburn

BT28 3AL

Telephone: 0800 80 76 60

Email: WMU.FOI@darea-ni.uk

Dear ██████████,

Environmental Information Regulations 2004

Thank you for your request for information received by the Department on 12 March 2026 which sought the below information:

- **A Severity Matrix: A copy of the formalised criteria or "scoring" document used to distinguish between High, Medium, and Low severity incidents.**
- **Reporting Requirements: Specifically, what evidence (e.g., photos of dead fish, estimated volume of discharge, or proximity to spawning beds) is required from a caller to ensure an incident is not defaulted to "Low Severity" during the initial 30-minute assessment?**
- **Performance Data: For the last reporting year, what percentage of incidents initially assessed as "Low" were later upgraded to "Medium" or "High" after a site visit?**

I can advise that the Department has completed its search and can confirm that it holds the information you requested.

The Department can confirm that there is a severity matrix used to distinguish between low, medium and high severity incidents. However, as this document is currently under review it cannot be released as the Department has applied Environmental Information Regulations 2004 **Regulation 12(4)(d) - Material in the course of completion, unfinished documents, and incomplete data.** The appropriate Public Interest Test has been conducted and is available as **Annex A.**



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Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

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Reporting evidence to help the NIEA initially classify a water pollution incident, includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Location of observed pollution/'fish kill' with provision of an address, landmark, What3Words or Irish Grid Reference (12 figure)
- Description of the pollution (quantity, extent, colour, opacity, odour, density, identifiable matter, sewage related debris)
- Photographs of the pollution, plume and/or source
- An indication of the suspected pollution source whether a known individual, a company (if industrial/commercial premises), Northern Ireland Water Ltd or from an identified address
- Observed impact on downstream receptors (fishery/wildlife, amenity sites, bathing waters, shellfish waters, potable water abstraction points)
- Duration of event and whether it is a new or recurring incident

Every potential water pollution event should be reported to the NIEA Incident Hotline (0800 80 70 600) when first observed or when your members first become aware of it. Any supporting photographic and/or video evidence should be emailed to emergency-pollution@daera-ni.gov.uk. By providing as much of the above information as possible, our Operations Room staff (office hours) and Duty Emergency Pollution Officers (out of hours) can assign the appropriate initial severity classification and initiate response.

Incidents in 2025 that were initially assessed as low severity and later upgraded following initial investigation by our field staff are detailed in **Table 1** below.

Table 1 – Summary of 2025 Water Pollution Incidents initially assessed as low severity and upgraded to medium or high severity upon investigation

Total Reports Assigned Low Severity	1686
Unsubstantiated upon investigation	926
Retained Low Severity upon Investigation	718
Severity Classification Upgraded upon Investigation	42

If you require any clarification, believe that any part of your request has been overlooked, misunderstood or misinterpreted, please contact me in the first instance to see if it is a matter that can be resolved.

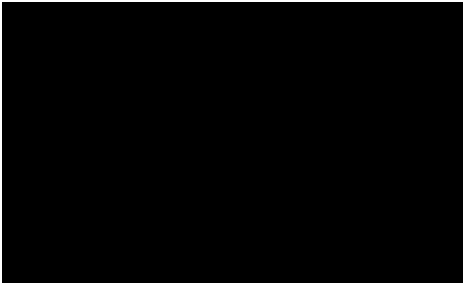
If you are unhappy with the manner in which your request for information has been handled or the decision to release/withhold information, you have the right to request a formal review by the Department.

If you wish to do so, please contact The Review Section either by e-mailing daera.informationmanager@daera-ni.gov.uk or by post at The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Data Protection & Information Management Branch, Floor 2, Jubilee House, 111 Ballykelly Road, Ballykelly, Limavady BT49 9HP, within two months from the date of this letter.



If after such an internal review you are still unhappy with the response, you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, CHESHIRE, SK9 5AF, who will undertake an independent review of the Department's decision.

Yours sincerely,



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