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How current risk assessment and risk management methods for drinking water in The Netherlands cover the WHO water safety plan approach

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Description

In the Netherlands, safe and sufficient drinking water is provided to the general population by ten drinking water companies. To guarantee safe drinking water the World Health Organization (WHO) developed a Water Safety Plan (WSP), a Risk Assessment and a Risk Management (RA/RM) framework. The objective of the study was to identify legally required RA approaches, to document application of RA/RM activities at Dutch drinking water companies and to determine to what extent these RA/RM activities as a whole cover all the elements of the WHO WSP approach. This study could be of interest to both managers of large water utilities and decision makers.

The assessment was performed by means of a policy review and interviews with two to four staff members involved in RA/RM from all ten Dutch drinking water companies combined with a joint workshop. The drinking water companies are well aware of the potential hazards and risks that can influence the drinking water quality. To guarantee the supply of safe and sufficient drinking water, the Dutch drinking water sector uses six different legally required RA/RM approaches. This study shows that by using the six legally required RA/RM approaches, all WSP steps are covered. WSP entails a generic risk assessment for identifying all hazards and hazardous events from source to tap, whereas the six legally required RA/RM each focus on specific risks at an advanced level. Each risk assessment provides information on specific hazards and hazardous events covering a part of the water supply chain. These legal requirements are complemented with additional RA/RM activities at sector and water company level such as codes of practices and standard operating procedures. The outcomes of all RA/RM approaches combined provide information from source to tap. When using multiple RA/RM approaches, it is crucial to share and combine information derived from the different activities.

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