

# REPORT OF A BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STATISTICS



## 1. Core Information

<b>Title and link to statistical output</b>	Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report 2020 <a href="https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-environmental-statistics-report-2020">https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-environmental-statistics-report-2020</a>
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<b>Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)</b>	<a href="https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-environmental-statistics-report-2020">https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-environmental-statistics-report-2020</a>
<b>Date of breach report</b>	22 May 2020

## 2. Circumstances of breach

<b>Relevant principle(s) and practice(s)</b>	<b>Trustworthiness:</b> <b>T3.3</b> Access to statistics before their public release should be limited to those involved in the production of the statistics. <b>T3.4</b> The circulation of statistics in their final form ahead of their publication should be restricted to eligible recipients.
<b>Date of occurrence of breach</b>	21 May 2020
<p>On Thursday 21 May 2020 at 20:47 an email was circulated to DAERA senior staff which contained an unpublished official statistic on winter dissolved inorganic nitrogen (DIN) from the Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report (ESR), which is a National Statistics compendium publication.</p> <p>This National Statistics publication was not due to be released until Thursday 28 May 2020 at 9:30am. The individual responsible for sending the email, received early access to a section of the report (2 pages) and the statistics they have operational responsibility for, as part of the quality assurance process.</p> <p>The DAERA senior statistician, who had been copied into the email, spotted the breach and, at 8:20am on Friday 22 May, took prompt action to request that the email was immediately recalled. She then contacted the 25 other recipients of the email to advise that no data from the unpublished ESR should be circulated and asked people to delete the email and not forward onwards. The relevant people all responded to the request, confirmed deletion and that the email had not been forwarded to anyone else. There were some difficulties contacting the sender of the email and the email was actually recalled at 2.45pm.</p>	

### 3. Impact of the breach

This breach was discovered quite quickly and dealt with swiftly. All those who received the email were senior officials from within DAERA, who all confirmed deletion of the email. No-one external was sent the official statistic.

The email related to one official statistic out of a compendium publication which includes approximately 20 National and official statistics.

### 4. Corrective actions (taken or planned) to prevent re-occurrence

The Senior Statistician took prompt action to request that the email was immediately recalled (at 8:20am). She then contacted everyone who had received the email to advise that no data from the unpublished ESR should be circulated (8:30am) and later with the instructions to delete the email and not forward onwards (12:20pm). The relevant people responded to the request, confirmed deletion and that the email had not been forwarded to anyone else. The sender recalled the email at 2.45pm.

The press office and private office were also advised of the breach, whilst waiting to hear from recipients that the email was deleted (many staff were off for the long Bank Holiday weekend). This was to help mitigate against any further dissemination should any copies of the email or official statistic remain in the system.

The individual who issued the email and line manager will be reminded of their obligations in relation to National and official statistics and the Code of Practice for Statistics with particular attention paid to trustworthiness and orderly release. The individual was aware of the restrictions relating to the sharing of data but felt that it was appropriate to share with the email group as they were senior officials working on a related topic. Further training and communication about the Code of Practice will be issued to officials within the department working on management information, administrative data and those involved in the preparation and quality assurance of the statistics.

Internal quality assurance processes will be reviewed to ensure reminders are issued to all staff that statistics that have not been published yet should not be shared. This will include marking statistics as 'unpublished'.

The DAERA Minister and Permanent Secretary have been advised of the breach and a statement about the breach has been published alongside the report.