

Hazardous Waste

Waste is described as hazardous if it is, or contains, materials or substances that make it harmful to health or the environment. In Scotland, hazardous waste is known as 'special waste'.

Hazardous waste streams include things like asbestos, waste chemicals, clinical waste, waste oils and solvents. Other examples might include redundant or broken electrical equipment with potentially harmful components such as cathode ray tubes or lead solder, also fluorescent light tubes, vehicle and other lead-acid batteries and waste refrigerators containing ozone-depleting substances.

If a business produces hazardous waste there are a number of legal requirements that must be complied with. In England and Wales the premises may need to be registered with the Environment Agency. They will issue a unique premises code which is valid for 12 months from the date of registration. If hazardous waste continues to be produced after the expiry date the registration must be renewed. This can be done up to one month in advance.

In England the premises do not need registration with the Environment Agency if the waste produced is less than 500 kilograms of hazardous waste in any 12-month period (less than 200 kilograms in Wales); and a registered (or exempt) carrier is used to remove the waste.

If the business has multiple premises each waste production or collection area must be registered individually. Multiple premises generally exclude sites with adjoining buildings. If premises are shared with other waste producing businesses, each business area of activity must be separately registered.

Premises in Northern Ireland or Scotland do not need to be registered. However the Northern Ireland Environment Agency or Scottish Environment Protection Agency must be pre-notified before each consignment of hazardous waste leaves the site.

Whenever hazardous waste is removed from the premises it must be accompanied by a consignment note until it reaches its final destination. Producers of hazardous waste must keep copies of these notes for three years.

All businesses that produce waste have a duty of care to make sure that it is handled safely and in compliance with the requirements of the law. If the waste is hazardous, the producer has a legal obligation to ensure that it is stored and transported safely.

If hazardous waste is kept on the premises, even for just a short period, the facility manager must ensure that it is stored securely and not store different types of hazardous waste together. Hazardous and non-hazardous waste must not be mixed and liquid hazardous waste should be kept

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in a dedicated area, with a bund or barrier to contain spills and leaks. These must be regularly checked for leaks, deteriorating containers or other potential risks.

Written instructions should be displayed for storing and disposing of each type of hazardous waste and an inventory maintained of the hazardous wastes and where they are stored. Staff should be properly trained to deal with problems with hazardous waste.

More information on hazardous waste regulations can be found at the Environment Agency website

<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk>