

your waste — your responsibility



Factsheet for general business

Treating non-hazardous wastes for landfill

This factsheet will give you more information about the new rules that mean you can no longer send untreated waste to landfill.

What do I need to do, for my business?

From 30 October 2007, landfills can no longer accept untreated waste.

You should review how your business manages its waste and speak to your waste management contractor about this new requirement.

- Find out if your waste is sent to landfill. If it isn't, then these new rules should not affect your business.
- If your waste **is** sent to landfill, find out how else you could manage your waste. The way we manage waste in our country is changing and in many cases there are other more environmentally-friendly options available for example, recycling.
- If you decide to keep sending your waste to landfill, find out if it is treated first. Much of the waste that businesses produce is already treated before it is sent to landfill. In these cases no further treatment is necessary.
- If your waste is not currently treated, this factsheet can help you decide how to meet the new requirement.

Why must I do this?

The requirement to treat waste is part of a package of measures, applied across the EU by the Landfill Directive. The rules are designed to:

- increase waste recycling and recovery
- reduce potentially polluting emissions from landfills.

How can I make sure my waste is treated?

After 30 October 2007, if you decide to keep sending your waste to landfill and it isn't already treated, there are some simple ways you could help to improve the environment and comply with the new rules.

- Try to collect your non hazardous waste as individual waste streams. You can then send one or more of these separated waste streams for recycling, for example your cardboard. This counts as treatment. If you already do this, then there is no need to do more.
- You can also ask your waste management contractor to take your waste and sort out part of it for recycling. We expect that many small businesses will do this, often because they don't have enough time or space for separating the waste themselves.

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www.environment-agency.gov.uk

- You already have a 'Duty of Care'¹ to ensure that you describe your waste properly and only give it to an authorised person. You should also take all reasonable steps to ensure that it is disposed of at an authorised facility. From 30 October 2007, when you transfer waste to someone else, you should tell them whether the waste has been treated or not. It is good practice to fill out a written declaration and to keep a copy.

Examples of 'treatment'

- A florist decides to keep paper and cardboard for recycling. They also decide to look at whether they can have any old flowers composted.
- A small bakery already keeps clean paper and cardboard separate for recycling. As part of their existing environmental management system they have identified an opportunity to start recycling plastic as well.
- A plumbing firm decides to keep any metal separate for recycling by a scrapyards. They might also be able to get any rubble they produce separated for hardcore by a contractor.
- A restaurant decides to separate glass from general waste and send it for recycling. The restaurant might also be able to keep clean cardboard packaging for recycling.

Flowchart of decisions – what should you do?



*Waste Management in the UK is changing rapidly, and you should regularly review it whether you could choose a better option for treating and disposing of it.

¹The Environmental Protection (Duty of Care) Regulations 1991

Some commonly asked questions

What is the purpose of treatment?

Treatment is intended to encourage us to recycle more and reduce the impact of the waste that continues to be landfilled.

What does 'treatment' mean?

The legal definition of treatment requires three things (the 'three-point test'):

1. It must be a physical, thermal, chemical or biological process including sorting.
2. It must change the characteristics of the waste.
3. It must do so in order to:
 - (a) reduce its volume, or
 - (b) reduce its hazardous nature, or
 - (c) facilitate its handling, or
 - (d) enhance its recovery.

Is source segregation an acceptable treatment option?

Segregation is equivalent to sorting. Both are acceptable treatments, provided that a reasonable amount of the sorted or separated materials are not set to landfill. Treating or recovering some of the waste is necessary to reduce the volume landfilled or enhance recovery.

Is compaction a treatment?

No, a squashed cardboard box has the same potential for impact on health or the environment as a cardboard box.

What happens if I share a skip with other businesses on site?

Check whether the waste is sent to landfill. If it is, talk with the other businesses on site about the opportunities that exist to treat the waste on site. You can also speak to your landlord about the possibility of providing an alternative arrangement, such as separate bins. This could help you avoid paying for further treatment if your waste is mixed with someone else's untreated waste.

Also, if your collector intends to take the waste to landfill, they will need to make sure that all the waste has been treated. Otherwise they will have to take it to a treatment facility.

Where can I get more advice?

- More advice can be found in *Treatment of non hazardous wastes for landfill*.²
- Talk to your waste contractor about what opportunities are available for your waste.
- Your trade association should be able to help you.
- Free government-supported environmental consultation, advice, and documentation for UK businesses is available from *Envirowise*.³
- Advice for businesses on complying with environmental legislation is provided by Netregs.⁴

²<http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/pdf/GEHO0207BLWJ-e-e.pdf>

³www.envirowise.gov.uk

⁴www.netregs.gov.uk