

Treatment of non hazardous waste for landfill

Purpose of this note

The Landfill Directive is having a major, positive impact on managing waste in England and Wales. This note sets out how we expect waste producers and waste managers to comply with the future requirement to **treat** non hazardous waste before it is landfilled.

Background

The Landfill Directive aims to reduce the negative effects of landfilling wastes. It will do this by reducing our reliance on landfilling and also by improving the technical standards of landfill sites. The Directive's main consequences for waste producers and waste managers are:

- Some wastes such as tyres are banned from landfill
- Biodegradable municipal waste is being progressively diverted from landfill
- Disposing of hazardous and non hazardous waste together is prohibited
- Hazardous wastes must meet strict limits before they are landfilled
- Waste must be treated before it can be landfilled.

Many of these changes are now in place, however two more important changes will happen from October 30 2007. These requirements:

- ban the landfilling of non hazardous liquid waste and
- require non hazardous waste to be **treated** before landfilling.

Similar requirements are already in place for hazardous waste. These have helped protect the environment by reducing the pollution potential of hazardous waste as well as the amount that is landfilled.

What is treatment?

You can define 'treatment' by using the following 'three-point test'. All three criteria must be satisfied for all of the waste to have been treated:

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 recovery.

The purpose of treatment

Treatment is good for the environment as it helps to:

- identify and separate wastes that can be recycled
- reduce the impact that the waste has when it is landfilled.

Unlike with hazardous waste, there are no standards or limit values (waste acceptance criteria) to which non hazardous waste must be treated before it can be landfilled. Much of

the waste that is produced in this country is already treated before landfilling. In this case no further treatment will be necessary.

One of the simplest ways to pre-treat your non hazardous waste is to separately collect your waste as individual waste streams and recycle one of the separated streams. Alternatively your waste management company can treat the waste for you before it is sent to landfill. This can include simply sorting your waste at a transfer station and recycling part of this waste. Alternatively your waste management company may use more advanced technologies such as:

- Mechanical Biological Treatment
- Thermal treatment
- Anaerobic digestion.

In the case of household (municipal) waste, Local Authorities already have to meet challenging targets for diverting the biodegradable parts from landfill. Municipal waste is therefore being treated already.

Environment Agency approach

We will implement this new requirement in a fair and proportionate way. Our approach is to concentrate on advising waste producers of the need to adapt their waste management practice and pointing out the opportunity it presents to improve their environmental performance. For the waste management industry our focus is on improving management systems and waste acceptance procedures across the sector rather than prosecuting individual operators.

Waste producers

If you are a waste producer, you can either

- treat the waste and provide information about this for later holders of the waste; or
- ensure that a later holder will treat the waste before it is landfilled.

You do not have to treat the waste yourself and we expect many will simply buy this service from a waste contractor. Individual waste producers will need to decide this. It is good practice for you to complete a written declaration stating:

- whether you have treated the waste
- the type of treatment that has occurred (if any); and
- if relevant, the amount of waste sorted out for recovery or alternative treatment.

An example written declaration is provided in our guidance [Treatment of non-hazardous wastes for landfill](#).

If you are a landfill operator

You need to ensure that waste is treated before accepting it at your site. The following options will help you to check whether a waste has been treated:

- up-front discussions with the waste producer or contractor about the nature of the waste and any contractual arrangements for treating it;
- checking the paperwork with the load. It is good practice to seek a written declaration from the producer or holder that the waste is treated;
- initial visual inspection;
- inspection following deposit;
- carrying out an 'audit' of the producer's arrangements.

You will already be doing much of this as part of your waste acceptance procedures.

customer service line

08708 506 506

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

incident hotline

0800 80 70 60

floodline

0845 988 1188

Further advice

If you are a waste producer, your waste management company can help you to adapt to this new rule and manage your waste more effectively. Practical guidance on how to treat your waste can be found at [Treatment of non-hazardous wastes for landfill](#). The Environment Agency [Netregs web site](#) also provides helpful general information on how you can manage your waste.

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