

Providing Advice and Guidance to Business

Key issues

The Environment Agency provides advice and guidance to help businesses protect the environment and comply with environmental regulations. We work with many different business sectors ranging from large chemicals and power installations to small businesses in construction and agriculture.

We already provide a wide range of advice and guidance on our website, the NetRegs site for small businesses, our National Customer Contact Centre, national campaigns, written guidance, face to face visits and inspections. We have also carried out plain language training for staff and have obtained Crystal Marks for 75 external forms and guidance documents. We will build on existing good practice to improve our service even further.

We want all businesses to be successful and to take responsibility for protecting the environment. We want to help businesses understand what they need to do and how to do it.

The Environment Agency's role

Our job is to protect and improve the environment. This includes regulating business activities that could cause harm to air, land or water quality. We do this by:

- providing advice and guidance to help businesses reduce their impacts on the environment and comply with regulations,
- promoting compliance and good environmental practice directly and through others including local authorities, business advisors, professional and trade bodies,
- taking firm but fair enforcement action when it is necessary to uphold the law and to protect the environment.

We will provide advice and guidance to help business protect and improve the environment and comply with the law. To achieve this we will:

1. Provide clear advice and guidance that:

- is accurate, timely and can be relied on by business,
- states the type of business to which it applies and the standards we expect,
- explains when business may need to take further advice tailored to its operations,
- sets out the economic benefits of compliance and good environmental practice,
- explains the actions we can take to protect the environment.

2. Deliver advice and guidance through:

- our telephone and web-based services, including the NetRegs service for small businesses,
- Business Link (<http://www.businesslink.gov.uk>),
- third party organisations and targeted campaigns.

For customers that need to register with us, we will:

- provide guidance on how to apply for and comply with our registrations,
- provide advice through targeted communications and visits, based on the risk to the environment.

For customers that need to hold environmental permits, we will:

- provide technical and regulatory guidance on how to apply for and comply with our environmental permits,
- hold pre-application discussions with businesses,
- inspect sites when there is a good reason to do so and provide advice during visits.

3. Develop and communicate advice and guidance effectively. We will:

- write our guidance in plain, easily understood language,
- develop and publish advice with business, other regulators and advisors,
- train our staff to advise on what is best for the environment and for business,
- explain how business can report inaccurate advice and guidance, or suggest improvements, via our customer contact centre and the government's better regulation website.

Sources of information

Environment Agency website

Our business and industry web pages give advice, guidance and information on current and forthcoming environmental regulations. They also have sector-specific technical guidance and information. The link to these pages is: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business>.

NetRegs online environmental guidance

NetRegs provides free environmental guidance to help businesses comply with environmental legislation and protect the environment. NetRegs is a partnership between the Environment Agency in England and Wales, SEPA in Scotland and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. The link to NetRegs is: <http://www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs>.

National Customer Contact Centre (NCCC)

The NCCC is a single point of contact for all our customers. It gives a consistent and efficient approach to a broad range of customer queries. The NCCC telephone number is 08708 506 506 (Monday to Friday 8am-6pm).

The Regulators' Compliance Code can be found at:

<http://www.berr.gov.uk/whatwedo/bre/inspection-enforcement/implementing-principles/regulatory-compliance-code/page44055.html>.

The Government's Code of Practice on Guidance on Regulation (the 'Golden Rules') can be found at: <http://www.berr.gov.uk/whatwedo/bre/code/page46954.html>.

The Government's Better Regulation website is at www.betterregulation.gov.uk. You can use this to submit ideas on how to improve regulation, including advice and guidance.

customer service line

08708 506 506

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

incident hotline

0800 80 70 60

floodline

0845 988 1188