

Knowing about regulating pollution where you work

Regulating pollution



The place where you work - we'll call it a factory - is regulated under the Environmental Permitting Regulations.

This is to reduce any pollution the factory may cause and, in particular, to help improve air quality. By complying with the regulations, your factory will be reducing its environmental impact.

How it is done

The factory needs a permit to operate. The permit will include conditions which will say how the factory must be run to minimise pollution.

The Government has published guidance for each type of factory. This says what are likely to be the right pollution standards. Under the law, the standards must strike a balance between protecting the environment and the cost of doing so.

Huntingdonshire District Council is responsible for regulating your factory and this means that from time to time an officer from the Council's Environmental Protection Team will visit to check the regulations are being complied with.

As well as considering local circumstances the Council must by law have regard to the Government's guidance. The guidance can be found on Defra's website.

If all goes well

The Council rates the factory as high, medium or low risk. This is based on two things:

- how reliably and effectively the permit conditions are complied with

- how well-managed the factory is.

If a factory is rated low risk, the Council charges less for it to be regulated as it means that the environment is being more reliably protected. Sometimes factories can't reduce their risk level, however well it is managed, because of the type of work that is done.

If things go wrong

The Council can serve various sorts of legal notice or take the business to Court if a business does not comply with its permit or operates without one.

However, the preference is to work with businesses to solve problems, only using tough measures as a last resort. Council officers often try to advise on money-saving ways to lower pollution.

What can employees do?

Everyone in a factory can have a role in helping to make sure the permit is reliably complied with and to minimise the environmental impact of the factory.

This may just be by following instructions on how to comply with permit conditions, keeping a look-out for possible problems or suggesting ways of improving the factory's environmental performance.

Don't forget that ideas for improvements could also save the business money, such as, by reducing waste.

Be sustainable!

Saving energy, using less water, reducing waste and other similar actions are referred to as "sustainable consumption and production". Another term is "resource efficiency" i.e. doing the same thing but using fewer raw materials.

According to Government figures:

- **£6.4 billion** a year could be saved by UK businesses just by taking resource efficiency measures that cost little or nothing (2007 data)
- **2% of annual profit** is lost through inefficient management of energy, water and waste
- **4% of turnover** is spent on waste.

Want to know more?

For the legal side, the law is in the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016, as amended. The Regulations also implement some European Community Directives.

If you want more information about the procedures you will need to read Defra's General Guidance Manual. Defra is the Government Department responsible for the Policy of the Regulations in England: www.defra.gov.uk

There is all sorts of information and contacts about resource efficiency from the Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP): www.wrap.org.uk

For more information contact:

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