



ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS IN THE UK

This information sheet summarises environmental regulations for businesses in the UK.

The topics covered are:

1. **Framework for UK environmental regulations**
2. **Key environmental regulations**
3. **Environmental tax allowances and levies**
4. **Further information**

Environmental regulations are, by definition, complex and subject to legislation which changes from time to time. Businesses are, therefore, strongly encouraged to contact the appropriate environmental regulator in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland (see below) and to take professional advice on the implications of specific environmental regulations for their business.

1. FRAMEWORK FOR UK ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS

Protecting the environment is a key focus for the UK Government. The UK has committed to meet global and European targets that seek to reduce the impact that business and society is making upon the environment, including the commitment to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide by 80% by 2050 (compared to 1990 levels) and a specific target to ensure that by the end of 2010, at least 74% of the UK's packaging waste is recovered.

The main UK Government Department responsible for the environment is the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (please see: www.defra.gov.uk). Within the UK, the key environmental regulators are:

- in *England and Wales*: the Environment Agency
www.environment-agency.gov.uk/
- in *Northern Ireland*: the Northern Ireland Environment Agency
www.ni-environment.gov.uk/
- in *Scotland*: the Scottish Environment Protection Agency
www.sepa.org.uk/

In addition, there are several organisations in the UK that support businesses to comply with environmental legislation (please see Appendix A for further details). Two key organisations include:

- *NetRegs*: a partnership between each of the environmental regulators in the UK that provides detailed environmental guidance for businesses. For further information, please see: www.netregs.gov.uk/
- *Envirowise*: an organisation that delivers a government-funded programme of free, independent and confidential environmental advice to UK businesses. For further information please see: www.envirowise.gov.uk

2. KEY ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS

There are several environmental regulations that can apply to businesses located in the UK. These regulations are dependent upon various factors that include the type and size of the business, the industry sector and the specific processes being undertaken.

The key environmental regulations in the UK cover the following areas:

- a) Air
 - b) Hazardous substances
 - c) Land
 - d) Packaging
 - e) Waste and recycling
 - f) Water
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- a) *Air*
Regulations relate to issues such as smoke, dust, noise, ozone depleting substances, odour and emissions of solvents. For details on specific regulations, please see: www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs/63187.aspx
 - b) *Hazardous substances*
Regulations cover the collection, storage, handling, processing, use and disposal of various substances including oil, ozone depleting substances, pesticides and biocides, radioactive substances, animal by-products and hazardous/special waste. For details on specific regulations related to hazardous substances, please see: www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs/63448.aspx

- c) *Land*
Regulations cover factors such as contaminated land and the use of landfill sites for disposal of business waste. For details on specific regulations related to land, please see: www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs/63530.aspx
- d) *Packaging*
Regulations cover businesses that produce, use or handle packaging or packaging materials, and are designed to encourage businesses to reduce the amount of packaging used. For details on specific regulations related to packaging, please see: www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs/63254.aspx
- e) *Waste and recycling*
Regulations cover the handling, storage, transport and disposal of trade waste, as well as the recycling of products (such as electronics and electrical products). For details on specific waste and recycling legislation, please see: www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs/63480.aspx
- f) *Water*
Regulations cover water pollution, water abstraction and the discharge of trade effluent to public sewers. For details on specific water legislation, please see: www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs/63294.aspx

Many environmental regulations require businesses to obtain relevant permits or licences to enable them to undertake activities such as the discharge of liquid waste to public sewers, the handling or storage of hazardous waste or the emission of specific substances. For details on permits and licenses, please see: www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs/63143.aspx

For detailed information on the regulations for companies operating in key business sectors and industries (such as electronics, chemicals, food and drink, metal processing, engineering and office-based businesses), please see: www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs/businesses/default.aspx

3. ENVIRONMENTAL TAX ALLOWANCES AND LEVIES

The UK has specific tax allowances and a climate change levy to encourage businesses to reduce, or make more efficient, their use of energy. For example:

- *The Enhanced Capital Allowance (ECA) scheme* provides businesses with enhanced tax relief for investments in equipment that meet published

energy-saving criteria. Companies that purchase energy-efficient machinery qualify for a 100 per cent tax allowance in the first year of purchase. Energy-efficient machinery includes energy-saving plant and machinery, lighting, water conservation plant and machinery, and natural gas and hydrogen refuelling infrastructure. For further information, please see: www.eca.gov.uk/etl/

- *The climate change levy* is designed to persuade businesses to reduce their energy use or to use energy from renewable sources. It applies to electricity, natural gas, petroleum and hydrocarbon gas in a liquid state, coal and lignite, coke, semi-coke of coal or lignite and petroleum coke. Commercial and industrial users of energy from these sources must pay the levy (which is collected by the suppliers of these goods). For further information, please see: www.cclevy.com/

4. FURTHER INFORMATION

This information sheet was updated in December 2009.

As information changes from time to time, please contact the organisations listed or UK Trade & Investment to confirm any item that you intend to rely on.

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APPENDIX A

Organisations that can provide advice and support on environmental regulations and issues include:

Organisation	Role
NetRegs www.netregs.gov.uk/	A partnership between each of the environmental regulators in the UK that provides detailed environmental guidance for businesses.
Envirowise www.envirowise.gov.uk	An organisation that delivers a government-funded programme of free, confidential environmental advice to UK businesses.
The Carbon Trust www.carbontrust.co.uk/default.ct	Helps business to reduce carbon emissions and supports the development of low carbon technologies.
The European Environment Agency www.eea.europa.eu/	Supports sustainable development and helps to achieve significant and measurable improvement in Europe's environment through the provision of information.
The Chartered Institute of Wastes Management www.ciwm.co.uk/	A professional body which represents over 7,000 waste management professionals.
The Environmental Services Association www.esauk.org/	Represents the UK's waste management and secondary resources industry.
The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health www.cieh.org/	A professional, awarding and campaigning body focusing on environmental health and safety.
The Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management www.ciwem.org/	A professional and examining body for scientists, engineers and environmental professionals.
The British Safety Council www.britsafe.co.uk/	Assists companies to improve environmental performance and sustainability.