

news release

December 2008

Environment Agency issues new gypsum waste guidance

New science confirms there is no acceptable limit for gypsum to be deposited with biodegradable waste

Firms dealing with gypsum waste, such as plasterboard and plaster, are being encouraged to recycle and reuse more as new guidance on gypsum going to landfill was recently announced by the Environment Agency.

The landfilling of gypsum and other wastes with a high sulphate content together with biodegradable waste has been banned in England and Wales since July 2005. This is to prevent the build up of hydrogen sulphide gas which is both toxic and odorous. However, where construction waste contains small amounts (up to 10 per cent) of gypsum, separate disposal has to date not been required.

From 1 April 2009 the 10 per cent guideline will be scrapped and gypsum waste that cannot be recycled and is sent to landfill must be deposited in a separate cell with non-biodegradable waste.

Liz Parkes, the Environment Agency's Head of Waste, said: "In response to calls from industry we have up to now been taking a pragmatic view that separate disposal was not necessary for construction waste containing low levels of gypsum.

"However, our position is changing because new science confirms that the relationship between the amount of sulphate in waste and the production of hydrogen sulphide gas is complex. We cannot therefore set an acceptable limit within which gypsum can be deposited with biodegradable waste without creating this gas.

"We are also aware that some were relying on the disposal guideline at the expense of segregating and recycling their construction waste. But the guideline was never intended to be a limit to allow producers to add gypsum up to 10%.

"In line with the Landfill Directive, which is about minimising the impact of landfilling on the environment, we want to encourage the reuse and recycling of more gypsum and other high sulphate-bearing waste while reducing the potential production of hydrogen sulphide gas at landfill."

The new guidance, which can be found [on our website](#) means that from 1 April 2009, producers of construction and demolition waste must:

- Separate gypsum-based material from other wastes so it can either be recycled, reused or disposed of properly at landfill
- Not deliberately mix gypsum waste or plasterboard with other waste

Meanwhile, landfill operators must:

- Adopt waste acceptance procedures that will identify whether a waste stream contains gypsum-based material
- Dispose of gypsum waste in a separate cell that does not contain biodegradable waste above specific limits
- Let us know about any non-compliant load and its producer so we can take action

As well as revising its position on gypsum, the Environment Agency is working with industry to develop guidance on the management of other wastes with high sulphate content which it hopes to make available in Spring 2009.

Industry views are also currently being sought on the draft **Quality Protocol for gypsum from waste plasterboard**. Unveiled last month by the Waste Protocols Project - a joint Environment Agency and WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme) initiative – the Protocol would see gypsum lose its waste tag once it has been recycled to an agreed standard. This would help boost the market for gypsum recycling.

You can take part in the *Quality Protocol Consultation for the production and use of gypsum from waste plasterboard* online at <http://qp.dialoguebydesign.net> The consultation closes on **Thursday, 22 January 2009**.

Further information on plasterboard waste, gypsum and its markets is available at www.wrap.org/plasterboard General construction resource efficiency information is available at www.wrap.org.co.uk/construction

For further information on the Waste Protocols Project, go to www.environment-agency.gov.uk or www.wrap.org.uk

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