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News Release

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SIMPLE AND FAIRER WASTE EXEMPTIONS FROM ENVIRONMENTAL PERMITTING

Proposed changes to the system of environmental permit exemptions will increase waste recovery and recycling, whilst maintaining high levels of environmental protection and saving businesses money, Environment Minister Joan Ruddock said today.

Defra, the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and the Environment Agency are reviewing which waste handling businesses can operate under exemptions, and which require a permit.

An exemption allows certain waste management activities to be carried out without an environmental permit (formerly known as a Waste Management Licence). Exemptions do not free an operator from regulatory control, but provide a proportionate level of regulation for low risk activities which do not pollute the environment or pose a risk to human health.

Joan Ruddock said:

“Environmental permits are an essential tool in protecting the environment from the impacts of waste, but the system must be fair, simple and proportionate to risk. The changes we are proposing in the consultation we have published today deliver all those things. Our estimate is that they will also offer real savings for some businesses by cutting red tape and making waste management more efficient, which could be as much as £45m over three years.”

The review will be of interest to any business recycling, re-using or disposing of any kind of waste. Most businesses currently operating under an exemption will continue to do so but under the new proposals businesses may need to renew and re-register their exemptions more frequently to ensure waste registers are up to date. Some businesses that have previously operated under a waste exemption may now need to apply for a permit, while those with an Environmental Permit may be able to register an exemption. It is proposed that the cost to the Environment Agency of regulating the system will be met through a charge for the registration of all exempt waste operations.

Jane Davidson, the Welsh Assembly Government Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing, said:

“These proposed revised exemptions will complete the new environmental permitting regime and ensure that the level of regulation of waste activities match the risk they pose to the environment. This consultation is an opportunity for industry to help shape the new exemptions system.”

Dr Paul Leinster, Acting Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, said:

“Most of the waste exemptions currently available have been in place since 1994 with little or no amendment. To keep pace with the changing world of waste management and the new techniques that have been developed, we need a revised suite of exemptions.

“We are seeking to encourage businesses to recover and recycle their waste by offering exemptions for truly low risk operations. Conversely, we are proposing tightening the regulations for those operations that pose a higher risk to the environment.

“We need to hear the views of businesses which might be affected before we make changes to the system. We would encourage all businesses handling waste to look at the website to find out if their waste activity might be affected, and to participate in the consultation.”

The consultation is open for 12 weeks from 31 July and 23 October 2008.

To participate visit www.defra.gov.uk/environment/waste/management/exemptions

To find out if your waste activity may be affected by the proposals visit www.defra.gov.uk/environment/waste/management/exemptions

NOTES TO EDITORS

SECTOR	HOW MIGHT THE PROPOSALS AFFECT ME?	FOR EXAMPLE
Construction	Some activities that currently require notification will now need a standard permit	Businesses producing more than 500 tonnes of aggregates from inert waste will require an application for a standard permit The use of more than 500 tonnes of aggregates made from inert waste will require an application for a standard permit
	Some activities that currently require notification of the exemption, subject to assessment, will become simple exemptions	The use of less than 500 tonnes of inert material in a construction works will become a simple exemption.
Agriculture	Some exemptions that are commonly registered by the agricultural community will need to be renewed every three years.	Burning of up to 10 tonnes per day of plant matter will still operate under an exemption. However, it will need to be re-registered every three years. We have proposed that a registration fee of £50 by paper or phone or a lower fee online, to be paid per site.
	We will offer simple exemptions for environmentally sound methods of disposing of non-hazardous materials produced on a farm.	A new simple exemption is proposed for the on-farm anaerobic digestion for up to 1000 tonnes of of manure and slurry.
Waste management	We are proposing that there should be varying limits on the quantities of waste stored in order to register a simple exemption. The limits will depend on whether the waste	The limit for a simple exemption for paper recycling will be 500 tonnes if the paper is stored outside and 3000 tonnes if it is stored inside.

	is stored and processed inside or outside.	
	We will introduce more simple exemptions for the storage, re-use and dismantling of a wide range of materials destined for recovery.	<p>The storage, re-use or dismantling of up to 100 tonnes of footwear will become a simple exemption.</p> <p>The storage, re-use or dismantling of up to 100 tonnes of wooden pallets will become a simple exemption.</p>
General business	Some waste activities that have operated without a permit or exemption will now need to register a waste exemption for the first time.	<p>The following wastes will need to have an exemption:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clinical waste Clothing Construction and demolition waste Electrical equipment waste Food waste from retailers and producers Furniture and household items Hazardous waste Oil The production of small amounts of biodiesel from used cooking oil

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