

ENVIRONET NEWS

The electronic newsletter for improved environmental performance

Introduction

Welcome to the first issue of Environet News, the electronic newsletter from Environet Consulting Limited, designed to keep business and public sector managers informed of changes in environmental and health & safety legislation, new environmental products and technology, opportunities in environmental marketing and progress at Environet.

The newsletter is available on the world wide web. If you wish to receive future issues you can register by visiting our site <http://www.environet-uk.co.uk>, by Email on contact@environet-uk.co.uk (or alternatively by fax on 01275 857199). The newsletter is sent out free of charge by E mail. Printed copies are also available free of charge to UK businesses.

Environet Web Site

We are proud to announce the launch of our web site, which is designed to provide clear information on the environmental and health issues facing businesses and to promote new environmental products and technology. Please browse through it and give us your comments. We are also interested to hear from other organisations who manufacture or supply environmentally sound products and or services. For those that do not have a web presence, space is available on our site's 'Product and Service Notice Board'. For those with a site we are looking to establish external links to other sites of environmental interest. The site will be regularly updated, therefore any feedback you give us will help us to develop it further.

Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) Regulations 1997

The deadline of August 31st 1997 will soon be upon us. If your business has a turnover of over £5 million and handles more than 50 tonnes of packaging per annum you may have obligations under the Regulations to recover and recycle a percentage of your packaging waste.

You must either register with the Environment Agency by 31st August 1997 if you are to manage your own collection, recovery and recycling scheme or you must join an approved Compliance Scheme i.e. Valpak, Wastepack.



Non compliance is a criminal offence and could result in a fine of £5,000 in a Magistrate Court or unlimited fine in the Crown Court.

The Regulations are made under sections 93-95 of The Environment Act 1995 to implement the recovery and recycling targets in the EC Directive on Packaging and Packaging Waste (94/62/EC).

The DOE have produced a 78 page User's Guide to help you familiarise yourself with these new obligations. If, however, your management time is better spent on your core business activities Environet can determine the implications on your business and how to most efficiently discharge your responsibility.

Waste Minimisation

The first step in the UK Government's waste strategy is to encourage minimisation of waste. The Landfill Tax and the new Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) Regulations impose legal and financial burdens on businesses to encourage efficient use of resources and lower levels of waste. Richard Watkins, waste minimisation expert from Richard Watkins Associates explains.

Businesses will often only look at the 'bottom line' figures to gauge their performance. But



environmental performance will often affect these figures, hiding the fact that waste levels are too high.

Waste management is one tool that is employed to

ensure that waste is disposed of in a more efficient manner. This may involve segregating waste to enable recycling of some materials and arranging waste contracts that are more financially beneficial to the company.

But the picture is greater than this - good waste management is only part of the solution, the answer lies in reducing the waste to the minimum in the first place rather than relying on 'end of pipe' technology. This requires a thorough understanding of the processes of the company so that these processes can be systematically audited and areas where waste is produced fully identified.

The benefit to a company lies in:

- Cost savings - by reducing waste a business can benefit from lower disposal costs and eliminating costs of production that go to make that waste.
- Competitive advantage - improved company image through the product and it's cost.
- Regulatory compliance - with ever stringent environmental and safety regulation, process auditing will highlight areas of non compliance.
- Risk reduction - with better knowledge of the production processes and better control there will be a reduction in environmental risk. As environmental standards increase it is important for businesses to be able to react to changing requirements.

Is Your Workplace a Productive Environment?

The focus on driving project capital costs down has undoubtedly increased the efficiency of the construction industry, but has it left a legacy of poor quality buildings, with high running costs, escalating maintenance costs and poor productivity?

Life cycle analysis (LCA) techniques help to optimise the balance between capital and revenue costs of a project and help ensure the working environment is suited to it's application rather than the aspirations of it's designers.

The costs of energy, maintenance and consumables are relatively easy to predict, but what costs are imposed on businesses from reduced productivity as a result of excessive

noise, poor lighting and inaccurate temperature control and how many days are lost due to building related ill health?

Consider that a mere 2% increase in productivity for the average worker on a salary of £25k on an earnings to salary ratio of 3:1 amounts to £1500 per annum extra profit. If your profit margin on turnover is 10%, you would need to increase your turnover by £15k per employee to match this efficiency saving.

Contaminated Land and the Landfill Tax

Customs and Excise have clarified the tax exemption allowance on developers disposing of contaminated soils in landfill sites. Tim Smithers, partner at solicitors Veale Wasbrough and specialist in environmental law and the property sector explains.



The disposal at a landfill site of contaminated soils arising from the reclamation of contaminated land may qualify for exemption from landfill tax (LFT). There is an important distinction between “reclamation” and “construction” works. The exemption relates to the former but not the latter.

Shortly after the LFT regime was introduced last October, a row broke out between developers and Customs and Excise. Developers claimed that, rather than allowing exemption for all contaminated soils arising on the site, Customs and Excise were ordering developers to pay tax on contaminated soils excavated from building footprints and service trenches.

Customs argued that the clearance of the material would have been necessary whether or not the soil was contaminated, and that in any event such excavation amounted to “construction” marking the end of the LFT exemption period.

The new guidance meets the developers’ complaints. The new guidance states that “if we are satisfied that what is taking place is reclamation, then the waste arising from that work would all be exempt, even though it would have been removed in any case. (i.e. to level dig, dig foundations or service trenches) as part of the latter construction.”

However, developers need to recognise that obtaining exemption on a brown field site is by no means a foregone conclusion. For example, in order to

obtain an exemption certificate the developer must show that:

- remediation involves clearing land of pollutants that are causing harm eg. to water or to human health, or damaging the fabric of structures or services, or have the potential to do so. Expert evidence may be required to back up the claim: and
- unless the pollutants are cleared, the land would be prevented from being put to its intended use. In addition to technical evidence, developers may try to satisfy this requirement by inviting local authorities (in a break with tradition) to place such a condition on their planning consent.

Environmental Liability for Building Owners and Occupiers

Bristol based solicitors, Veale Wasbrough and Environet Consulting Limited are hosting a 1 hour seminar on environmental liability on 13th November 1997 at 5.00 pm at Veale Wasbrough's offices in Bristol. There is a charge of £17.63 which includes VAT. If you are interested in attending please contact Nic Seal at Environet.

“SPECTRUM” Environmental Awareness Software

Spectrum is a tailor made software package developed by Environet Consulting Limited in conjunction with Spark Data Systems Limited, designed to unleash employee participation in your environmental efficiency initiatives.

- Are your employees aware of your commitment to environmental efficiency?
- Do your employees understand and support your Environmental Policy?
- Can you track employee awareness and participation in your environmental initiatives?
- Do you have an effective mechanism for generating and collating ideas from your employees?

SPECTRUM not only helps you answer these questions and more, but is the fun and powerful way of building employee awareness and participation in your ‘shared responsibility approach’ to the environment.

Each employee logs on through a profiling screen and is taken through a series of questions relating to both environmental and health & safety issues relevant to your organisation's activities. Further explanation and interesting statistics on a range of environmental and health & safety issues are offered as the user progresses through the application.

Spectrum is designed to get your employees thinking about these increasingly important issues and sharing the responsibility for continual improvement. Suggestions are encouraged by an IDEAS page which accompanies each subject and is collated in the management reporting section.

Questions typically cover energy consumption and efficiency, other resource consumption, waste minimisation, duty of care, recycling, disposal, safe storage, air and water emissions, ecosystem protection, contamination of land, noise, dust, odour, air quality, lighting, COSHH, and others to suit your own particular circumstances. In addition, the management reporting section can be tailored to give statistical breakdown of items such as current awareness and participation support.

This newsletter is for guidance only and professional advice should be obtained before acting on any information contained herein. Environet Consulting Limited cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned to any person as a result of action taken or refrained from in consequence of the contents of this publication.



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