

**A** recent report showed the number of small businesses taking action to improve their energy and water efficiency has doubled in just two years.

But more than a third still do not recognise green regulations as relevant to their business, according to the survey by the Environment Agency's guidance service NetRegs.

Non-compliance with environmental legislation can have severe consequences including fines, shutdown of operations and custodial sentences.

Every business has an impact on the environment. To reduce the harm your business may cause, you need to be aware of ever-changing environmental legislation.

The areas covered are wide ranging and include air quality, energy, hazardous waste, packaging, solvents, waste from construction and water.

There is a constant stream of new EU directives, acts of parliament and consultations in the pipeline, and staying ahead of the game can seem like a daunting task.

Many environmental regulations are aimed at specific activities or industry sectors, but some are very general and apply to the vast majority of companies, regardless of size or type of business.

Here are some examples of recent and forthcoming legislation as well as some consultation papers:

■ **The Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Regulations** — came into force in January 2007, and require disposal of this equipment in an environmentally responsible manner.

Equipment sold after August 13, 2005, displays a logo of a crossed-out wheellie bin, and your business can return it free of charge to the manufacturer.

Equipment sold before this date can be either returned to the manufacturer of your new equivalent equipment (if you are replacing it), or disposed of via an authorised treatment facility. Remember to keep full records of your WEEE disposal for auditing purposes.

■ **The Landfill Directive** — came into force in 2002 and was implemented to reduce the amount of waste being sent to landfill sites. The high charges made for disposing waste to landfill continue to increase in order to encourage waste reduction and the use of alternative disposal methods, such as recycling.

Since April 1 2009, the rate has been £40/tonne, increasing by £8/tonne per year until at least 2013.

■ **The Climate Change Act 2008** — came into force in November 2008. This commits the UK to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 80 per cent of the 1990 levels by 2050, and gives ministers powers to introduce measures necessary to achieve a range of greenhouse gas reduction targets, such as the inclusion of aviation and shipping emissions by the end of 2012.

In September 2009, DEFRA published guidance for business on how to measure and report their greenhouse gas emissions, though at present this is a voluntary guide.

■ Virtually every business in the UK will be affected by the **EU Batteries Directive**. As from January 1, 2010, the disposal of batteries by landfill or incineration will be banned.

Waste portable, industrial and vehicle batteries must be separately collected, treated

# It pays to be aware of green regulations



**Frank Pavy, a specialist in environmental, quality and safety management systems, reviews the latest green legislation and alerts us to proposed new laws which are currently in the pipeline**

and recycled. Battery users will be encouraged to separate their waste batteries to help treatment and recycling, for which suppliers and producers will be responsible.

■ **The Environmental Liability Directive** came into force in England on March 1 this year. This piece of European legislation forces polluters to prevent and remedy environmental damage caused by their activities.

■ **The Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC)** is a UK-wide scheme which starts in April 2010 and initially applies to large private and public organisations only.

■ Changes to hazardous waste regulations came into force for England on April 6, with the **Waste Regulations 2009**.

If you produce, move, receive or dispose of less than 500kg of hazardous waste in any year, you do not have to register with the Environment Agency. This limit was previously 200kg.

■ Various other proposed regulations include: **Groundwater regulations** (expected late 2009); **Revised Environmental Permitting regulations**

(expected spring 2010); and **Water Protection Zones regulations** (expected December 2009).

Help is at hand via a number of organisations including NetRegs, Envirowise and the Environment Agency.

The NetRegs website ([www.netregs.gov.uk](http://www.netregs.gov.uk)) in particular addresses all current and future legislation according to your business sector.

An increasing number of companies are choosing to implement a formal Environmental Management System (EMS), such as ISO 14001.

This puts procedures in place which enable companies to stay up to date with legislation and deal with the consequences, but also gives a framework by which they can manage and so minimise their impact on the environment.

Implementing ISO 14001 is a public demonstration of a company's commitment to minimising environmental impacts, and is becoming a requirement for trade with an increasing number of organisations, especially in the public sector.

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