

Landfilling of gypsum waste including plasterboard

Purpose of this note

This statement summarises how we will regulate the landfilling of waste containing or consisting of gypsum in England and Wales. If such wastes are disposed of with biodegradable wastes it can lead to the production of odorous and toxic hydrogen sulphide gas. To reduce the impact of this waste we want to ensure that it is managed properly. This position supersedes all previously issued regulatory positions connected with the landfill of gypsum waste. We are developing guidance with industry on the management of 'other high sulphate bearing waste' that will be available soon.

Background

The Landfill Directive sets out the general conditions for the landfilling of waste with the aim of minimising the impact of landfill on the environment and to encourage waste minimisation and recycling.

Regulations¹ set out the criteria for the acceptance of gypsum and other high sulphate bearing wastes at landfill:

'Non-hazardous gypsum-based and other high sulphate bearing materials should be disposed of only in landfills for non-hazardous waste in cells where no biodegradable waste is accepted'.

Limits apply to organic carbon in waste to be deposited in such cells.

Our position

The landfilling of gypsum and other high sulphate bearing wastes with biodegradable waste has been prohibited in England and Wales since July 2005².

We had been taking a pragmatic view that separate disposal is not necessary where construction waste contains small amounts (up to 10%) sulphate. This was a working guideline that we always planned to review in response to scientific research.

The results of this research will be available soon (Sulphate Bearing Waste: Determination of a Concentration Limit for Separate Disposal). It will confirm that the relationship between sulphate in waste and the production of hydrogen sulphide gas is complex, but will conclude that we cannot set a practicable limit for gypsum wastes. We are therefore revising our guidance to remove the 10% guideline value.

Our intention is 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 a landfill.

This position applies to loads of waste containing identifiable **gypsum-based materials** (e.g. plasterboard). This material **must not be landfilled** with biodegradable waste. Producers of gypsum waste should separate it for **recovery and recycling** wherever possible. Where a load of gypsum is sent to landfill it must be deposited in a separate cell with waste that does not have a biodegradable content that exceeds specified limits.

How do I manage my waste gypsum-based materials?

All waste destined for disposal to landfill must be treated. We have produced guidance that is available at: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/1745440/444663/landfill/1789720/?version=1&lang=en>

The simplest method of treating gypsum waste is to separate it from other waste at the point of production. You could also send your waste to a contractor to sort it for you at a waste transfer facility. Separated gypsum waste can be recycled or reused, for example in the manufacture of plasterboard or for agricultural soil treatment. You can get more guidance on managing gypsum waste and alternative uses for it, from WRAP. See: www.wrap.org.uk

If you are a producer of construction and demolition waste, including a waste transfer facility:

- If you are in England and your construction project is worth more than £300,000 you must have a site waste management plan (SWMP). See the Netregs web site at: <http://www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs/legislation/380525/1555007/>
- You must try to separate the gypsum-based material from other wastes so that it can then be either recycled / reused or can be disposed of properly at a landfill.
- You must not deliberately mix gypsum waste with other construction and demolition waste at a waste transfer facility.
- You must comply with your Duty of Care and only pass your waste on to someone who is an authorised carrier.
- You must try to recycle and treat as much of your other wastes as possible, for example by separating at source or by passing it on to someone else to treat. You must provide your waste carrier with a full description of your waste and the treatment that it has received. He can give you a form to complete, or you can use our own treatment confirmation form. We have produced 'Guidance for waste destined for disposal in landfills': http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/commondata/acrobat/wacv2_1006008.pdf,

If you are a landfill operator:

- You must adopt waste acceptance procedures that will identify whether a waste stream contains gypsum-based material.
- If you accept gypsum waste you must dispose of it in accordance with the waste acceptance criteria and in a separate cell that doesn't contain biodegradable waste.
- You must let us know about any non-compliant load and its producer so that we can take action.

What you can expect from us

- We will work with the construction sector, WRAP and the waste management industry to raise awareness of this revised position.
- We will publish this position that removes the 10% guideline value and encourages waste producers to find alternative management methods for their gypsum waste.
- After 1 April 2009, if gypsum waste is accepted for disposal in the same cell as biodegradable waste, we will take action in accordance with our enforcement and prosecution policy.
- We take a pragmatic and proportionate approach to enforcing the Regulations. If occasionally small amounts of gypsum are found in loads of waste being disposed of at landfills, we expect landfill site operators to remind their customers of the requirements. We will take enforcement action against those who deliberately abuse the rules.

customer service line

08708 506 506

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

incident hotline

0800 80 70 60

floodline

0845 988 1188

References:

1. The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2007, schedule 10, paragraph 5(1)(g).
2. The Landfill (England and Wales) Regulations 2002 (as amended), regulation 10(2) and schedule 1, paragraph 15 [now repealed].