

Written by Luke

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Recent evidence of widespread non-compliance with Duty of Care legislation for waste, introduced by the government in 1990, has led to the launch of a campaign to raise awareness of the law and its requirements. The 'right Waste, right Place' campaign is primarily aimed at informing smaller businesses about the law and their obligations, as research suggests that 94% of non-compliant organisations are Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).

Lack of compliance has contributed to the substantial and growing problem of waste crime, particularly with regard to fly tipping, as the number of recorded incidents soared to 900,000 in England during 2014/15. This represented an 11% increase on the previous year, and cost local authorities at least £50 million in cleanup costs, which could have been used to provide other much needed services. Commercial waste proved to be the second largest component of fly tipping, and had risen by 18% over the year.

Sam Corp, Head of Regulation at the ESA, commented: "The number of organisations actively involved with this project, representing a broad range of sectors, shows just how serious an issue Duty of Care compliance is. Very few organisations want to actively flout the law, but most are simply not informed about what they have to do. Unfortunately being uninformed is no protection from the law, and we believe that more companies will find themselves exposed to prosecution unless they take the right steps to comply. The right Waste, right Place campaign is designed to help fill the very evident knowledge gap, especially with SMEs."

The encouraging news is that research shows that 90% of non-compliant businesses, when informed about their obligations under Duty of Care, expressed the aspiration to comply. The key to achieving this was raising awareness of what their obligations are and what they had to do to meet them.

Duty of Care awareness campaign launched as research suggests 56% of UK businesses are not complying

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Primarily, but not exclusively aimed at SMEs, right Waste, right Place will raise awareness of the Duty of Care legislation and provide practical information to help companies, partnerships, family businesses and sole traders from a broad range of sectors to comply and help keep waste out of the hands of waste criminals. An interactive website has been developed as a part of the campaign, www.rightwasterightplace.com and is designed to be easy to use, convenient and pragmatic.

Not only will the site contain essential information to help establishments and businesses comply, but it will also act as a simple portal to a wide range of other information and services for those with more sector specific enquiries.

The campaign is managed by the Environmental Services Association (ESA), sponsored by the Environment Agency (EA), the Chartered Institution of Wastes Management (CIWM) and the Environmental Services Association Education Trust (ESAET) and supported by the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Build UK, The National Farmers Union (NFU), Veolia, Travis Perkins, URoC, SUEZ and The Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC).

“Sadly waste crime is still a big problem in England. Illegally deposited waste is unsightly, environmentally destructive and expensive to clean up, but it is only the visual tip of a larger iceberg of waste crime, where criminals are getting rich on exploiting widespread ignorance of the law. The right Waste, right Place campaign will help businesses to realise and practically address their obligations under law, so that they can become compliant and keep waste out of the hands of criminals. In doing so we believe that most companies, no matter what size, will save money and become more efficient into the bargain,” commented Mat Crocker, Deputy Director of Waste and Illegals, Environment Agency.

The campaign will use a wide range of initiatives to help increase awareness, many of which will utilise social media to reflect the way a lot of smaller businesses now source information and become involved. right Waste, right Place will also be promoted in the trade and sector media, relevant exhibitions, seminars and industry events.