

6 problems regarding waste management:

How to dump your company cash



1. Not knowing how much waste you actually get rid of and how much it costs your business

Most businesses don't know how much of their raw materials they are actually wasting. This also goes to say that they don't know exactly what it costs them as a business.

It isn't just the cost of actual waste disposal, it's also about the cost of the raw material, energy and staff time that all goes to waste too. If you add it all up it can amount to a lot of your profit going into the bin!

Start by looking in your bins, skips and containers - what gets thrown away?

Then find out how much it costs to dispose of your waste

By looking at your waste can you see where and how you produce that waste?

Can you reduce that waste by changing practices or making staff aware?

Does waste come from:

- Breakdowns
- Poor housekeeping/damage
- Quality Control Process
- Out of date stock
- Packaging

Once you have identified where your waste comes from and how much waste you produce it is easier to look at how you can reduce your waste.

2. Not knowing where your waste goes to

As a business you have a legal obligation to know and demonstrate that your waste has been disposed of properly and are complying with waste legislation.

What should you have in place?

- Waste Transfer notes for all of your waste removed. As a producer of waste it is down to you to provide them, although most waste companies will provide you with a waste transfer note.
- Whoever picks up your waste are registered waste carriers
- Your waste goes to a licensed or permitted waste disposal site or is exempt

If you can't demonstrate that you have carried out duty of care and that your waste is disposed of properly you are liable to be prosecuted.

Carry out a duty of care audit of all your waste and where it goes to and that you are legal. We always recommend that you list your waste on a spreadsheet which will help you keep track of your waste carriers registration number, permit number where it was disposed of.

You should do this as a minimum once a year.

3. Not knowing if you produce Hazardous waste?

If you produce hazardous waste you must make sure that you comply with Hazardous waste regulations. An example of hazardous waste may be:

- Fluorescent tubes, batteries, some electrical equipment, fridges old televisions etc.
- Chemicals and solvents

If you're not sure check with the manufacturer or go onto the Environment Agency web site. You should have COSHH sheets in place for these materials.

What should you have in place?

- If you create 500 kg of hazardous waste then you need to register with the Environment Agency as a producer of hazardous waste.
- Consignment notes for all of your waste removed are available.
- Whoever picks up your waste are registered waste carriers and you have a copy of their license.
- Your waste goes to a licensed or permitted waste disposal site or is exempt
- The waste disposal site sends you confirmation that they are disposed of your waste within 3 months.

If you can't demonstrate that you have disposed of your hazardous waste properly you are liable to be prosecuted.

4. Why do we not think differently about our waste?

Some of the waste that your business produces may not be considered to be a waste by someone else. In the old days, nothing was thrown away, it was either repaired or passed to someone who would repair it or someone would be a Womble and reuse it somehow, but we don't seem to want to do it now, or it may be cheaper to buy new, or we just don't want things hanging about as well as it is harder to find people who will take away that waste.

There are still lots of ways that we can do this and encourage re-use without our premises starting to look like scrap yards!

A few suggestions of re-use are:

- Charities may be able to use items of office furniture, fences, pipes and reuse them as part of their projects or within their offices.

- Your waste packaging may be able to be re-used to re-pack items or by a packaging manufacturer.
- Find a recycling company that can find someone who can re-use it or use that material as part of their product.
- Soils may be re-used elsewhere or on another site.
- Unsold goods may be donated to charities or good causes, sold on line, or use surplus recycling and exchange web sites such as recipro or freecycle.
- Can you use waste paper as notelets?

Remember that under the UK definition that if you no longer want that material and you discard it, then you have to treat it as waste and make sure it goes to somewhere that is authorised to carry and take waste or is exempt from requiring a permit.

5. Not completing proper evaluation of legal compliance

On at least an annual basis you need to be reviewing all of your waste disposal and checking that you are complying with legislation and that you have copies of the licenses and permits that you need.

If waste contracts have been changed you should have these documents in place before they come and remove your waste.

If you don't have the details contact your waste collector to provide you with copies and keep them on file.

Recommendations to keep you up to date:

- Make sure your staff are aware in what should be in place
- Have a written procedure as to how you need to comply with waste legislation
- Use reputable waste companies who will send you details when you ask them
- If contracts change or waste collections change you will need to get copies of their permits.

6. Not separating your waste

If you throw all of your waste into one container or skip it gives the waste collector less chance to be able to take out the re-usable materials that can be recycled or that you contaminated the recycling content and it isn't good enough quality.

Some businesses can sell their waste and receive good prices just by keeping materials separate and/or bailing materials.

Don't just take the word of your current waste collection company that is the best solution, as it may only be the best solution for them. See what you can get and what other recycling companies can offer you for your resource (waste to you!)

Keep cardboard, plastic, paper separate, food waste, cans, glass if you produce enough of it.

Many of us are use to recycling at home and may not make sense that when we go to work we put it all into one bin and most employees now expect it from the workplace.