

# Waste electrical and electronic equipment

## A guide to when electrical and electronic equipment is considered waste and the controls that apply

Since July 2007, a system has been operating in the UK to take-back, reuse or treat and recycle used electrical and electronic equipment (EEE). This system is intended to reduce the amount of untreated waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) going to landfill and to ensure that what gets separately collected is dealt with properly. Further information about the WEEE system is available on our website here: [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/weee](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/weee)

We want to promote the reuse of used EEE whilst ensuring that WEEE is stored, transported and dealt with in a way that does not risk harming the environment. People who collect, keep or treat used electrical equipment need to understand when that equipment is classed as waste and what controls apply. This short guide is designed to help.

### Collection and reuse of WEEE

If an item of EEE has been discarded by the holder into any waste collection system it will become WEEE. There will also be circumstances where EEE is returned to a retailer and can be regarded as EEE until its status is known when it has been examined and tested.

Just because an item of equipment has been discarded and been classified as waste does not mean that it must be destroyed or that it cannot be repaired or refurbished and put back into use. However, for as long as an item is waste, waste management controls will apply.

### EEE from households

#### Situations where the EEE is not waste

- A householder has an item of EEE that needs to be repaired. They take it to a repairer who carries out the repair and returns the equipment to them
- A householder has EEE that's in working order but they no longer want it and they decide to sell it or give it away
- A householder purchases a new item of EEE and has their old equipment taken away by the retailer when the new item is delivered. In this circumstance the retailer should determine whether an item of equipment is waste.
- A householder has an item of used EEE that does not work but is not obviously beyond repair. They decide to donate it to a charity or community sector re-use refurbishment workshop.
- A householder returns EEE to a retailer under a retailer returns policy

### Situations where the EEE is waste

- A householder has an item of used electrical equipment and returns it to a retailer offering in-store take back for WEEE. There is clear intention by the householder to discard the used equipment and we consider it becomes waste at the retailer's premises. The retailer will be treated as the waste producer.
- A householder disposes of an item of EEE in their household waste bin or at a civic amenity site.
- A householder arranges for their used equipment to be taken away by their local authority as part of the bulky waste collection service.

### EEE not from households

#### Situations where the EEE is not waste

- A factory canteen has a leased vending machine. If the vending machine breaks down and has to be removed for repair or is taken away at the end of the contract period, the vending machine will not be regarded as waste at that point. If, following assessment, the owner of the equipment decides to discard the machine or break it for parts, it will become waste.
- A bank refits one of its branches and has 20 monitors that it no longer needs. The monitors are in full working order and the bank decides to donate them to a charity or to sell them.
- An estate agency has an old photocopier that doesn't work but is not obviously beyond economic repair. If it decides to donate the photocopier to a community sector refurbishment workshop, the equipment is not considered waste.

#### Situations where the EEE is waste

- A business disposes of an electric fan in a waste container
- If a local authority, business or charity collects and segregates non-household WEEE for re-use, the re-usable WEEE will only cease to be waste at the time of segregation if there is an auditable system that ensures that almost all of the items segregated will in fact be re-used (following repair if necessary).

## Waste controls for people who handle WEEE

The storage, transport, treatment and disposal of WEEE is covered by waste legislation. The main requirements are summarised below:

- An operator of a site that accepts WEEE to dismantle or treat for parts or materials will need an appropriate Environmental Permit. Information is available from our website at: [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/epr](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/epr)
- An exemption from environmental permitting can be registered with us for sites that store WEEE prior to recovery elsewhere, and a chargeable exemption is available for sites that refurbish WEEE.

Everyone that handles WEEE or other waste, including the waste producer, has a Duty of Care. This aims to look after waste from 'cradle to grave'. A business must:

- store their waste properly to prevent it from harming the environment;
- only pass it to someone authorised to deal with it;
- pass a written description of the waste (Waste Transfer Note or Hazardous Waste Consignment Note) to the waste carrier, this note accompanies the waste and helps others know how to handle the waste.

Waste producers should also check that all wastes leaving their site are taken to a properly authorised site. You can check with us if you have any doubts. If your waste later caused a problem (e.g. it was illegally dumped) you would need to be able to show us that you had taken all reasonable steps to ensure it was properly managed.

### Retailers

If you are a retailer and have an established system for returned goods to separate returned equipment for re-use (including re-use after repair) from that which is to be sent for treatment and recycling, only that sent for treatment and recycling will be regarded as waste. Items that have been competently assessed and segregated for re-use (even with repair) will not be regarded as waste. An established system means the retailer must have an auditable system that ensures that almost all of the items segregated for reuse will in fact be re-used.

If only the occasional item is actually re-used or there is not an auditable system in place that demonstrates that the items segregated for reuse have been reused, the equipment is likely to be waste from the time it is collected.

### Hazardous WEEE

Some WEEE (e.g. most computer monitors and televisions, fridges and fluorescent lighting) is classified as hazardous waste. Movements of hazardous waste will normally require a hazardous waste consignment note to be used. Since July 2005, many non-household producers of hazardous waste have also been required to register their premises with the Environment Agency. Hazardous waste controls may also apply to some of the waste substances and components removed from WEEE. Further information is available from our website at: [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/hazwaste](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/hazwaste)

customer service line  
03708 506 506

incident hotline  
0800 80 70 60

floodline  
0845 988 1188

[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

## Exporting EEE

If you have segregated equipment for repair or refurbishment and intend that repair or refurbishment to occur abroad, you must be able to show us evidence of an established system that ensures that almost all the equipment sent abroad will be re-used, repaired or refurbished. We will consider the nature of the equipment, the method of storage before and during transit and the frequency of shipments in addition to any evidence you supply in deciding whether we accept the shipment is for re-use.

If you intend to move waste into or out of the UK, then extra controls apply. You will need to understand exactly what is involved before moving the waste. Information on the controls that apply are available here: [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/wasteshipments](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/wasteshipments)

email: [iws@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:iws@environment-agency.gov.uk)  
telephone: 01925 542265

If you intend to export equipment from England and Wales which we do not consider to be waste, you should be aware that the country of destination may take a different view. Under the Waste Shipments Regulation (1013/2006) if the country of destination considers the equipment to be waste then the controls set out in that Regulation will apply to the export. You should make checks with the competent authorities in the countries of destination and transit before exporting the equipment, in order to establish whether they regard the items as waste and to ensure that all applicable controls are complied with.

## Further information

This guidance applies to England and Wales. You can get advice for operations in Scotland and Northern Ireland from SEPA and the NIEA respectively. We will periodically review this guidance and may revise it.

Free and confidential guidance on all aspects of environmental legislation across the UK is available on-line from the Business Link website: [www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)

You can phone us: 03708 506 506 or email us: [enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk)

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