

Hazardous Waste Regulations and Compressed Air



Owners of compressed air systems

Compressed air systems are subject to the Hazardous Waste Regulations, introduced in July 2005.

These affect all owners of compressed air systems with respect to the proper disposal of compressed air service parts and condensate which will normally be contaminated with oil and other potential harmful substances. See Fact Sheet 302 which covers condensate disposal.

The sources of hazardous waste in compressed air systems are:

Condensate - Oil from servicing activities - Used oil filter elements, desiccant, air filter elements - Air end/pump items - Gaskets, service parts, etc.

Are used desiccants considered hazardous waste?

Yes, unless it has been used in an oil-free system, the desiccant will contain oil. The regulations do not specify a lower limit of oil content, so any oil content deems the component to be hazardous. Some materials such as hopcalite, due to its caustic nature, are hazardous at the outset even before use in a compressed air system.

Are biodegradable oils considered hazardous waste?

Yes, even though they are less polluting than standard oil. Regardless of whether an oil complies with the international standard OECD 301B for biodegradability, it is still hazardous waste requiring proper disposal.

Hazardous Waste

You must ensure that hazardous waste produced or handled by your business causes no harm or damage. If you produce waste you must check if it is hazardous, classify it, separate it and store it safely. An authorised business must be used to collect, recycle or dispose of the hazardous waste. On disposal a consignment note must be completed and a copy kept at the premises that produced the waste for 3 years.

How do I check that my supplier is an authorised business?

- Ask to see the hazardous waste carrier / hazardous waste registration document
- Ask to see an audit trail of your waste oil for proof that it has been disposed of properly
- For access to the public register for environmental information visit: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/access-the-public-register-for-environmental-information>

Must I, as a compressed air distributor, register as a hazardous waste producer?

This used to be the case, but effective from 1st April 2016 you are no longer required to register as a hazardous waste producer.

To find out more visit: <http://epr.environment-agency.gov.uk/ePRIInternet/searchregisters.aspx> or Telephone the National Customer Contact Centre on 03708 506 506 (Mon to Fri, 8am to 6pm)

NOTE: Regulations differ in England, Scotland and Wales – Full details can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/dispose-hazardous-waste/print>