

SOODS LAW

**WHAT'S
REQUIRED OF
YOU TO COMPLY
WITH LEGAL
AND HEALTH &
SAFETY
LEGISLATION**

WEEE Directive

E-waste law eventually enforced in UK

The much-delayed Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive that makes producers and importers of electronic goods responsible for recycling their products finally came into full force in the UK on 1 July.

What is the WEEE Directive?

It is a piece of legislation covering the whole of the European Union that aims to reduce the amount of electronic waste (PCs, TVs, games consoles, communications equipment, etc) from homes and businesses that end up in landfill sites.

It requires member nations to collect and recycle the equivalent of 4kg of "e-waste" for every person living in the country.

Who will be affected by the new law?

Manufacturers, importers and retailers of electronic and electrical goods are obliged to put systems in place that allow customers to recycle their obsolete devices free of charge.

Manufacturers and importers in the UK have to join one of 37 authorised "producer compliance schemes".

These schemes, funded by manufacturers, are responsible for ensuring the correct collection, recovery and disposal of the e-waste. The schemes have to report to the Environment Agency, which will make sure the directive's measures are enforced.

Retailers must either offer a free in-store "take-back" service on a like-for-like basis, eg. take a customer's old TV when they buy a new one, or help fund improvements to local councils' recycling facilities.

How will it affect customers?

Households are under no obligation to recycle their e-waste as far as the WEEE Directive is concerned. However, they will "discouraged" from throwing away items that contain potentially harmful substances.

Instead, they will be encouraged to use the recycling facilities being offered to them through the various schemes.

To help people identify electrical and electronic equipment (EEE), products that have been on the market since August 2005 will be marked with a crossed-out wheelee bin.

What equipment is covered by the directive?

Below are the 10 WEEE categories, and some of the products that are included within the groups:

- **Large household appliances:** fridges, freezers, microwave ovens, washing machines
- **Small household appliances:** vacuum cleaners, toasters, coffee machines, electric toothbrushes
- **IT and telecommunications equipment:** PCs, laptops, monitors, keyboards, printers, cordless phones
- **Consumer equipment:** radios, TVs, DVD players, video recorders etc.
- **Lighting equipment:** low-energy Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFLs) are classified as WEEE
- **Electric tools:** all tools such as drills, saws, sewing machines. Only large, stationary industrial tools are exempt
- **Toys, sport and leisure equipment:** electric trains, game consoles, cycle computers etc.
- **Medical devices:** implanted or infected products are exempt
- **Monitoring and control devices:** smoke alarms, thermostats etc.
- **Automated devices:** this classification covers all appliances that automatically deliver products, e.g. drinks, food, money etc.

How big is the e-waste problem?

It is the fastest growing waste stream in the European Union. In the UK, an estimated 1.2 million tonnes of e-waste is produced each year.

While the WEEE directive requires about 20% of the nation's electronic waste being diverted away from landfill, it is hoped that that the new law will result in much more EEE being recycled.

Why has the UK taken so long to introduce the e-waste legislation?

When the WEEE Directive was first agreed in February 2003, it was criticised for being far too complex and costly to implement.

While a number of nations, such as Austria and the Netherlands, were able to implement the measures on time; others struggled.

The UK delayed adopting the legislation



a number of times. Following the announcement of yet another postponement in July 2006, the Conservatives criticised the government for taking "the longest WEEE in history". Officials blamed the delays on "major difficulties".

However, industry figures said the setbacks were a result of the UK attempting to establish a system that would be successful once it was up and running, whereas a number of other nations decided to adopt the directive quickly and sort out any problems as they occurred.

Implementing the WEEE Directive in the UK is estimated to cost between £111m and £133m, rising to £331m-£434m by 2017, according to the Department for Trade and Industry.

WEEE - Course Care already collecting

Course Care's national waste management service has been expanded to include WEEE items; computers, radios, TV's, phone, fridges, microwaves, fluorescent tubes, etc. With the regulations now firmly in place (1st July 2007), Course Care, operating an EA licensed waste transfer station are fully prepared and are already making WEEE collections. An extra vehicle has been added to their fleet to cope with the extra demand that has already been experienced.

Commenting, Joint MD, David Mears told us; "Waste management is a very important and growing part of our business, so we prepared for WEEE some time ago. It is amazing that there is so much redundant electrical and electronic equipment stored at premises up and down the country.

The implementation of WEEE has been a wake up call to many and we have taken innumerable calls from those wishing to dispose of these items in a proper and professional manner. We can offer such a service."

