

make it – sell it – recycle it

New rules for the disposal of electrical & electronic equipment

What do the WEEE Regulations mean for business users?

New regulations have been introduced this year to tackle the growing amount of waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE). It is one of the fastest growing waste streams in Europe, and in the UK alone, we throw away around 2 million tonnes of WEEE every year, much of which ends up in landfill. The regulations aim to ensure that more WEEE is separately collected for treatment and recovery, and less goes to landfill.

The regulations apply to all companies who import, manufacture, or re-brand electrical equipment in the UK; these companies are known as “producers”. They also affect everyone who uses, sells, treats or disposes of WEEE.

They affect the way WEEE is disposed of by setting treatment standards and recycling targets and, importantly, by making producers, rather than end-users, pay for its treatment and recycling in most cases.

Implications for business users

Shifting the burden of payment for the treatment, recycling and disposal of WEEE from end-users to producers will have a significant impact on purchasing and disposal arrangements.

Responsibility for business WEEE

- If you bought equipment before 13 August 2005, and are replacing it with new equipment fulfilling the same function, then **the producer of the new equipment** is responsible for the collection, treatment and recycling of the old equipment, regardless of whether they were the original manufacturer.
- If you bought the equipment before 13 August 2005 and do not replace it, then **you** are responsible for financing and arranging treatment in accordance with the WEEE Regulations and existing waste management legislation, including the Duty of Care and the Hazardous Waste Regulations.
- If you bought electrical equipment after 13 August 2005, then the **producer of that equipment** is responsible for its collection, treatment and recycling when you dispose of it.
- If you lease or rent equipment, the producer is usually responsible for its disposal.
- The regulations allow producers and business users to agree ‘alternative arrangements’, whereby the business user agrees to take on some or all of the future costs of the end-of-life treatment of the equipment he buys. This is a commercial decision that you will need to make and is likely to form part of the normal negotiating processes for supply contracts in the future.

Collection arrangements

- WEEE from business users may be collected by the obligated producer or the compliance scheme working on its behalf.
- WEEE may either be collected directly from your premises or you may be asked to take the WEEE to a local collection facility (which should be easily accessible to you).

What you need to do

Think about the environmental consequences before deciding to replace equipment. Do you really need to buy a new product? Your equipment could be upgraded or you could buy a refurbished product instead. If you have working equipment that you no longer need, think about passing it on to others instead of throwing it away.

Remember to take account of the WEEE Regulations when entering into commercial negotiations and procurement decisions concerning EEE.

If you are buying electrical products from a distributor or other intermediary, make sure that you obtain the producer registration number for the equipment being supplied so that you know who to contact to arrange disposal at the end of its life. Suppliers of EEE should always be able to provide this on behalf of producers.

If the producer is responsible for WEEE disposal, establish whether it is the producer or the producer's compliance scheme who will be arranging for disposal, and whether collection will be from your premises or a local collection facility.

Be aware of your responsibilities under other waste management legislation, such as the Duty of Care and the Hazardous Waste Regulations.

Where to find out more

- BERR website - www.berr.gov.uk/innovation/sustainability/weee/
- Environment Agency website - www.environment-agency.gov.uk/weee
- The Scottish Protection Agency – www.sepa.org.uk/weee
- The Environment & Heritage Service, Northern Ireland – www.ehsni.gov.uk/weee