

TOOLBOX TALK
NO.11
ENVIRONMENTAL – WASTE
MANAGEMENT



Defining waste... waste shall mean a substance or object which the holder discards, intends to discard or is required to discard.

The construction sector produces around 100 million tonnes of construction waste per annum, which is nearly a third of all waste produced in the UK.

A proportion ends up in landfill sites, which also has other environmental impacts, such as the generation of greenhouse gases, this contributes to climate change.

Most construction sites / premises produce significant waste which, if allowed to accumulate, can create new, or complicate existing, health and safety hazards.

Important points:

- Producers of waste must correctly identify whether surplus materials are waste and classify it as non-hazardous.
- Producers of waste have a legal duty of care to ensure that it is passed on to an authorised person with the correct technical competence and holding a relevant environmental permit or licence.
- All contractors who carry or collect construction and demolition waste should have a waste carriers licence.
- All waste transfers must be supported by the correct document – a controlled waste transfer note for non-hazardous waste.

Waste will always fall into one of three categories:

- ✓ Never hazardous
- ✓ Always hazardous
- ✓ May or may not be hazardous and need to be assessed

What makes waste hazardous is whether it contains any dangerous substances above certain thresholds that make it display a certain hazardous property. There are 15 hazardous properties that exist, from H1 to H15 – H1 is explosive, and H6 is toxic or very toxic.

Difficult waste includes invasive plants i.e. Japanese knotweed or giant hogweed, contaminated soil – this is a mixture of soils, stones, rubble and polluting substances and Gypsum and Plasterboard wastes, that when mixed with biodegradable waste, can produce hydrogen sulphide gas in landfill, which is both toxic and odorous.

Applying the waste hierarchy on a construction project for waste minimisation could include the following:

- ☐ Reduction/prevention
- ☐ Reuse
- ☐ Recycling
- ☐ Recovery
- ☐ Disposal



**SAFETY AS
STANDARD**

REDUCE – eliminating the generation of waste, where possible by stopping it coming on to site in the first place

REUSE – making use of materials in their original state on the same site or at other sites

RECYCLE – turning materials into new products for other purposes.

DO	DO	DO
PREVENT	PREPARE FOR RE-USE	RECYCLE
Store materials neatly to avoid damage and loss	Keep significant offcuts for use elsewhere	Materials where possible
Think of ways to reduce waste	Reuse materials until no longer fit for purpose	Segregate different waste types
Reduce the amount of waste created on site	Reuse materials for alternative purposes	Store waste in appropriate skip or container until removed from site
Keep materials in their packaging to protect them from damage		Ensure skips are labelled clearly and correctly
		Add 'housekeeping' to site checklists
		Clear up when work is carried out and completed.

DON'T
Put waste materials into the wrong waste container
Open new cans or pallets before the ones in use are empty
Leave materials unprotected and where they are likely to be damaged e.g. Rain
Mix different types of waste – it prevents recycling
Leave materials at risk from site traffic movement
Don't burn or bury waste – it is ILLEGAL
Dispose of aerosols or canisters in general skips

Questions:

1. Are the operatives familiar with the sites' waste management plan?
2. What happens to the waste when it goes off site?
3. Is plasterboard classified as hazardous or non-hazardous waste?
4. Disposing of foodstuffs carefully would avoid the attraction of vermin and diseases such as _____?