

Sent via email

Date: 09 April 2020

Dear Stakeholder

Coronavirus: Message to Regulatory Stakeholders

We wanted to let you know how we will ensure we continue to carry out our regulatory duties to protect people and the environment. We also wanted to provide reassurance that we will do what we can to support those we regulate during this period.

Our key priorities are to protect the health, safety and well-being of our own people, the public and the people we work with; to prevent loss of life and protect the environment; and to keep our critical operations running.

During the Coronavirus pandemic we are doing this by following the Government guidelines on reducing the risk of Coronavirus; by seeking to act quickly, decisively and proportionately; and by responding flexibly as the situation develops.

Our latest operational update can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/environment-agency-operational-update-3-april-2020>.

How we are continuing to regulate during the Coronavirus pandemic

We will continue to carry out regulatory visits to sites that could cause serious environmental harm where required. We will keep this approach to regulatory visits under review in line with our regulatory duties and the latest Government guidance. For all sites we are exploring how best to continue to regulate during this period, using alternative regulatory approaches such as increasing desk based compliance activity and remote ways of working.

Our people will comply with Public Health England advice throughout this time. Our priority remains protecting the environment and human health during this period.

Flexibility on regulation

We expect everyone that we regulate to take all reasonable steps to comply with all relevant environmental legislation, and prepare for any foreseeable impacts as far as practical to reduce the impacts on people and the environment.

However, we understand this is a difficult time for many organisations. Many will be facing staff shortages which will impact their operational ability. This may mean it is not possible for those who we regulate to fully comply with their environmental obligations for reasons beyond their control.

We are monitoring the situation closely and will consider the appropriate regulatory response to any unavoidable non-compliance. In determining our regulatory response, we will consider our Enforcement and Sanctions Policy. This will include considering whether it is appropriate to publish a Regulatory Position Statement (RPS) in relation to a particular regulatory non-compliance.

We have already published three RPSs for waste and water activities. All the RPSs are accessible here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/covid-19-regulatory-position-statements>. Please check regularly for any updates.

Charging

We depend on charge income to carry out our work to protect people and the environment, as well as protecting national infrastructure. We will update our customers with advice on charges shortly. We encourage anyone struggling to pay fees to contact our agents, Shared Services Connected Ltd (SSCL) to discuss.

To contact SSCL please use email (preferred method):
ea_fsc_customerservices@gov.sscl.com or call: 0345 300 1861

Where to find additional information on regulation

Further communications are being prepared and sent to the sectors we regulate on specific issues. We are also publishing up to date information on our website so please check for updates: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency>.

For general queries about the regulation of your site please continue to speak to your normal Environment Agency contact.

This is a difficult and fast-moving situation, but by working together we will find the solutions to the challenges we all face. Please share this letter with anyone who might be impacted.

Yours sincerely,



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