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Environment Agency

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Guidance

PPE waste from home healthcare workers treating patients with COVID-19: RPS C5

Updated 22 June 2020

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This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ppe-waste-from-home-healthcare-workers-treating-patients-with-covid-19-rps-c5/ppe-waste-from-home-healthcare-workers-treating-patients-with-covid-19-rps-c5>

Normally personal protective equipment (PPE) waste from healthcare workers treating patients in their own homes would be:

- coded as healthcare waste (18 01 03* if infectious, or 18 01 04 if non-infectious)
- collected separately from the patient's home through a courier collection service, or taken back to the relevant NHS England (NHSE) hospital or practice for disposal

As more people with COVID-19 (or suspected COVID-19) will need healthcare in their own homes we have produced this COVID-19 regulatory position statement (RPS) to minimise the:

- need for multiple separate collections of PPE waste from households
- risk of healthcare workers transmitting COVID-19 by taking PPE waste back to an NHSE hospital or practice

If they follow the conditions in this COVID-19 RPS, NHSE healthcare workers treating patients with (or suspected) COVID-19 in their own homes can dispose of PPE waste through the householder's normal non-recyclable waste collection.

When this COVID-19 RPS applies

This COVID-19 RPS only applies to PPE waste generated by NHSE healthcare workers treating patients with (or suspected) COVID-19 in their own homes.

This COVID-19 RPS does not apply to any other activity, even if it is under the same legislation. You may still need other permits or licences for other activities you carry out.

Conditions you must comply with

You can only dispose of PPE waste through the householder's black bag waste collection if you comply with the following conditions.

You can only put disposable PPE into the householder's bin for non-recyclable waste – this typically includes aprons, gloves and masks (including fluid repellent items).

You must also follow the current Public Health England (PHE) household guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection#cleaning-and-disposal-of-waste>) on cleaning and disposal of waste that could be infected with COVID-19.

This guidance states that you must securely store the PPE waste in disposal rubbish bags. You must place these bags in another bag. You must tie this bag securely and keep it separate from other waste. This waste must be set aside for at least 72 hours before being put in the usual external household bin for non-recyclable waste.

If PHE changes its guidance on COVID-19 and the disposal of household waste, we will review this COVID-19 RPS and if necessary withdraw or amend it.

You must make sure your activities do not endanger human health or the environment.

You must not:

- cause a risk to water, air, soil, plants or animals
- cause a nuisance through noise or odours
- adversely affect the countryside or places of special interest

Places of special interest include but are not limited to:

- European sites (Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas)
- Ramsar sites
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- national and local nature reserves
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Marine Conservation Zones
- National Parks

Enforcement

A COVID-19 RPS means that the Environment Agency will not normally take enforcement action against either NHSE healthcare workers or patients provided:

- your activity meets the description set out in this COVID-19 RPS
- you comply with the conditions set out in this COVID-19 RPS
- your activity does not, and is not likely to, cause environmental pollution or harm human health

If you operate under this COVID-19 RPS, but think you may no longer be able to comply with its conditions, you must tell the Environment Agency immediately.

When to check back

This COVID-19 RPS will be withdrawn on 30 September 2020 unless we extend it. After this date you must dispose of PPE waste following the requirements of Chapter 18 of the European Waste Catalogue regarding healthcare waste.

Contact the Environment Agency

General enquiries

National Customer Contact Centre
PO Box 544
Rotherham
S60 1BY

Email enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

Telephone 03708 506 506

Telephone from outside the UK (Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm GMT) +44 (0) 114 282 5312

Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm.

Due to the current health emergency we have reduced the times our phone lines are open. This is under review and we hope to be able to extend them soon. If possible please contact us by email at enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk.

The impact of COVID-19 on our teams means you may experience some delays in responses as most of our staff will be working from home. We are currently unable to deal with post sent to our offices in the usual way.