

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 9th September 2024

Huge success for waste wood sector as amber items officially deemed 'non-hazardous'

In a huge victory for the waste wood sector, the Environment Agency is set to classify amber waste wood items from both the HWRC and demolition waste streams as non-hazardous.

The decision follows six years of work involving over a thousand tests, led by the Wood Recyclers' Association (WRA), and is expected to save the industry millions in hazardous waste disposal costs and red tape.

Up until now, certain treated 'amber' waste wood items including fence posts and decking from households and ten items from demolition* have been deemed 'potentially hazardous'. These are currently subject to Regulatory Position statements [RPS249](#) and [RPS 291](#) which were due to expire at the end of September and are now in the process of being withdrawn.

Following a meeting with the WRA last week (September 4) to discuss the latest test results, the Environment Agency said it was satisfied that the amount of hazardous waste wood in both the HWRC (household waste recycling centre) and demolition waste streams was negligible and reducing.

This means that, even after the RPSs are removed, these items can be moved and processed as non-hazardous provided they are destined for panel board manufacture or Chapter IV biomass, with no requirement for further testing.

Wood from heavy industrial buildings is an exception and will still need to be assessed and tested to WRA02, now the recognised standard for hazardous waste wood by the Environment Agency.

Howard Leberman, Senior Policy Advisor at the Environment Agency, said: "We are very pleased to have reached a risk-based and proportionate outcome through great collaborative working with the WRA. We are therefore happy to remove RPS 249 and RPS 291 and will take the necessary steps to withdraw them before their expiry at the end of September."

Vicki Hughes, Technical lead on the WRA Board, said: "We are absolutely delighted that all our hard work has paid off and that the Environment Agency has recognised that the hazardous waste wood content in these waste streams is tiny and diminishing.

“While we knew the hazardous content was low, we needed the evidence to prove it so a massive thank you to all those organisations who took part in sampling and testing and in particular to WRA members, who really led the charge.

“This outcome will be hugely beneficial for our sector and is testament to our close collaborative working with the Environment Agency, SEPA, NRW and NIEA and also our project partners at the NFDC, UROC, ESA and CIWM Construction & Demolition Forum.”

Duncan Rudall, CEO of the NFDC (National Federation of Demolition Contractors), said: “We welcome this news which will significantly reduce the regulatory burden on those working in the demolition sector and potentially save our sector millions of pounds a year in testing and hazardous waste disposal costs. A big thank you to the WRA for leading this important project.”

Following the decision, those accepting treated waste wood onto their sites should update their Acceptable Materials Guides to reflect those changes.

The WRA will be updating its [WWC Toolkit](#) to include the new position. Alongside the NFDC, it will also be reviewing and updating the household and construction and demolition waste wood classification guidance documents.

The Environment Agency’s position relates to England and it is hoped that a similar position will be adopted in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, although the WRA is still awaiting confirmation.

Richard Coulson, WRA Chair, said: “I wish to pass on my sincere thanks to all involved in the Waste Wood Classification project for their time and diligence over many years to ensure we continue to make the best use of waste wood in a compliant manner. I’d especially like to thank and recognise Vicki and Julia’s work who have been instrumental in successfully delivering this project.”

Ends

Notes to Editors

*Amber items of waste wood are from buildings built between 1950 and 2006 and include:

Roof timbers

- Tiling and cladding battens
- Timber frames and joists

Amber items are also from buildings built between 1950 and 1995 and are:

- Barge boards, fascias and soffits
- External timber cladding
- External doors
- External windows

About the Wood Recyclers’ Association

The WRA has more than 120 member companies representing over 90 per cent of the UK’s wood recyclers and reprocessors. It acts on behalf of its members to provide a voice for the sector at the

highest levels, working closely with the Environment Agency, DEFRA, DESNZ and other trade associations and recycling bodies to influence and advise on issues affecting the industry, including legislation. Its members include wood recyclers and reprocessors, panel board mills, renewable energy suppliers, technology manufacturers, laboratories, consultancies and specialist insurance and health & safety companies.