

# **Consumer Information About Packaging Recycling**

Saint-Gobain is affected by the Producer Responsibility Obligations Regulations for Packaging and is complying with the legal requirements.

The Regulations brought “Consumer Information Obligations” into force in 2000, requiring us to inform our customers about packaging recycling.

The following is an introduction to packaging recycling. It gives you some information about what you can do to help and where you can go for more information.

## **What are the Packaging Regulations?**

The Producer Responsibility Obligations Regulations for Packaging became law in 1997 and implement the targets that Europe has set for all member states to achieve in the recycling of packaging waste.

The United Kingdom has agreed to recycle 70% of all packaging waste by the year 2008, and the Packaging Regulations provide the mechanism for ensuring that the targets are met.

To comply with these Regulations, businesses that handle packaging must

- Record the amount of packaging handled by them each year
- Meet the standards of accuracy laid down in the Regulations
- Register with the appropriate Agency (the Environment Agency for England and Wales, SEPA in Scotland and EHS in Northern Ireland)
- Acquire evidence of packaging waste recycling and energy recover (in the form of Packaging Waste Recovery Notes – PRNs).

## **What is the problem with waste?**

The Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs estimates that each household produces about 1 tonne of waste each year. This amounts to 28 million tonnes of waste produced in the UK each year.

The amount of waste we throw away increases each year and a quarter of that waste is packaging.

The big problem with throwing away this much waste is the effect of waste disposal on the environment. Modern landfill sites are constructed to a high standard, but the decomposition of waste still produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas that can also cause explosions in landfill sites or adjacent properties.

Also, the leaching of synthetic chemicals, heavy metals and bacteria from landfill sites into the surrounding land and the water table can also have serious and long-term effects.

## **Why should I recycle?**

The best solution is to reuse products and to reduce the amount of waste being produced. Waste Minimisation is particularly important for industry where there can be significant economic savings as well as the environmental benefits.

Sending waste for recycling avoids the payment of Landfill Tax. Clean, separated recyclable materials are a valuable commodity for the recycling industry. The advantage of recycling is that the production of goods from recycled materials generally uses less energy and creates less pollution than manufacturing from raw materials.

Over half the contents of the average domestic dustbin can be recycled. Recycling is a particularly good option for packaging waste, as virtually all forms of packaging can be recycled or incinerated.

Despite the potential to recycle or compost 70% of our general waste, the current recycling rate for the UK is only about 9% with 9% incinerated and 82% being buried in landfill sites. Packaging already does better than general waste with over 50% of all packaging waste being reprocessed today.

## **What is being done by Government?**

The United Kingdom is rapidly running out of landfill space. Landfill sites in the Southeast are likely to be exhausted first, unless waste production is reduced dramatically.

The Government has issued waste strategies for England, Scotland and Wales. These strategies include targets for recycling that must be met by local authorities. These targets require local councils and other organisations to ensure that more packaging from our dustbins is recovered for recycling.

The Government ensures that the Packaging Regulations are complied with through the enforcement activities of its Environment Agencies. The Agencies audit companies' compliance and can take Court action against those who fail to meet the standards.

## **What can be done by Businesses?**

Businesses are being encouraged to improve the management of their waste through such measures as the Landfill Tax, the Packaging Regulations and the forthcoming Regulations on Wastes Electrical and Electronic Equipment, as well as through the implementation of Environmental Management Systems such as ISO14000.

However, the opportunities to save significant sums of money by examining their waste streams are reason enough for many businesses to embark on waste minimisation and recycling projects.

## **What can be done by Individuals?**

There are recycling facilities throughout the UK for householders to take recyclable products from their own domestic waste stream. Also, many Local Authorities are introducing schemes to collect recyclable materials from the doorstep.

Individuals can also exercise their buying power to buy goods with less packaging. Suppliers would not provide over packaged goods if nobody bought them.

## **Where can I go for more information?**

Local Authorities provide information on recycling facilities and doorstep collections in your local area.

The Environment Agency provides recycling and waste minimisation information for businesses and can be found at [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk).

A useful website for locating recycling facilities is [www.recycle-more.co.uk](http://www.recycle-more.co.uk).

The Government's environmental help line provides an environmental information and sign posting service for businesses on 0800 585 794, or at [www.envirowise.gov.uk](http://www.envirowise.gov.uk).

The National Waste Strategy is available from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs at [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk).

The Industry Council for Packaging and the Environment (INCPEN) provides information on the meaning of symbols and icons on packaging, at [www.incpen.org](http://www.incpen.org).