

Emergency or Unscheduled Work to Heat Pump Systems, Refrigeration Units and Air Conditioning Units

Purpose

This position statement is intended to provide guidance to SEPA staff and those involved in the maintenance of Heat Pump systems, Refrigeration units and Air Conditioning units. This statement details SEPA's enforcement approach to the application of the Special Waste Regulations 1996 ("the Regulations") to the management of wastes resulting from **emergency or unscheduled work** on stationary heat pump systems, refrigeration units and air conditioning units.

The position can be summarised as follows:

In respect of special wastes arising from **emergency or unscheduled work** on stationary heat pump systems, refrigeration units and air conditioning units ("emergency or unscheduled work") a Special Waste Consignment Note ("SWCN") will not be required when the following wastes are produced as a result of such work and are transported to an appropriately licensed or exempt site:-

- less than 3kg of waste refrigerants contained in a **recovery cylinder**
- **oily wastes or oil contaminated waste compressors** with residual contamination (compressor, waste oil, etc.).

Background

Refrigerants, such as fluorinated (F) gases or ozone depleting substances (ODS), found in various industrial and commercial settings, and Oils, are a working component in various pieces of equipment such as stationary heat pump systems, refrigeration units and air conditioning units.

In most circumstances, this equipment will be subject to 'regular servicing' or 'planned maintenance' carried out by approved technicians with the movement of any wastes produced, waste refrigerant, waste oil and oily contaminated compressors etc., being carried out in accordance with the Special Waste Regulations 1996 (as amended).

Technicians will however carry out work or repairs outwith a regular planned programme and the 'emergency' nature of such call outs mean that there are practical issues in managing any special waste produced in compliance with the Regulations.

Waste arising as result of unscheduled or emergency work

Special Wastes produced from emergency or unscheduled work provide producers with a challenge in terms of managing that waste in accordance with the Regulations. The scenarios listed below are commonplace within this particular sector.

Use of Receiver Cylinders:

During the course of maintenance work technicians may be required to decant refrigerant, temporarily, into a 'receiver cylinder', allowing maintenance work to be undertaken. On completion of the task, the technician will return the refrigerant to the system leaving the 'receiving cylinder' in a 'partial vacuum' retaining only trace quantities of refrigerant. The near empty or empty cylinders can then be taken to a distribution centre for cleaning and re-use.

Use of Recovery Cylinders:

On some occasions the refrigerant will not be returned to the system and is decanted into a recovery cylinder for onward transportation to another location for storage, processing or disposal.

The quantity of refrigerant recovered will vary from relatively small amounts, for example a few hundred grams, ranging up to much larger quantities, for example 7 – 8 kilograms.

Waste Oils and Oily contaminated compressors:

During some maintenance works, a technician may be required to replace a compressor, likely to be contaminated with small quantities of oil, where this occurs the general practice is to return the contaminated compressor to a central point where it can be decontaminated i.e. drained free of oil prior to its onward transport for recycling or disposal.

SEPA's Position

In relation to emergency works or unscheduled repairs to stationary heat pump systems, refrigeration units and air conditioning units, SEPA acknowledge that many of the aims of the Special Waste Regulations 1996 are broadly achieved through compliance with the following:

- The Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases Regulations 2009
- The Ozone-Depleting Substances (Qualifications) Regulations 2009
- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- The Carriage of Dangerous Goods Act

With this in mind SEPA has adopted the following regulatory position on the management of special wastes arising from **emergency or unscheduled work** on stationary heat pump systems, refrigeration units and air conditioning units:

Where **empty or near empty receiver cylinders** intended for re-use after cleaning and are not subject to **discard** their transport is not subject to the Special Waste Regulations 1996.

The movement of **recovery cylinders** containing any amount of refrigerant (however small) is subject to the Regulations, however, SEPA recognises that in certain circumstances, such as emergency repair work, it is not always practical to comply with the Regulations for small quantities of waste refrigerant.

Therefore, SEPA will not normally take enforcement action where a **recovery cylinder** containing less than 3kg of **waste** refrigerants, produced because of emergency repair work, is transported without a SWCN under the Special Waste Regulations.

Please note however that this position applies only where the waste is being transported to an appropriately licensed or exempt site.

Where emergency or unscheduled work has resulted in **oily waste or oil contaminated compressors** a SWCN will be not be required for transportation of waste with residual contamination (compressor, waste oil, etc.) is to an appropriately licensed or exempt site.

However, where **oil contaminated compressors** containing non-residual amounts i.e. have not been subject to decontamination, are being transported to an appropriately licensed or exempt site for decontamination or disposal a SWCN is required.

Note any subsequent onward movement of waste refrigerant, contaminated compressor or waste oil, from a licensed or exempt site must be accompanied by a SWCN completed in accordance with Regulations.

Further information on the classification and movement of special waste can be accessed on the SEPA website at the following link: http://www.sepa.org.uk/waste/waste_regulation/special_waste.aspx

This regulatory position does not affect the legal responsibility of any person who produces, carries, keeps, treats or disposes of special waste to comply with their Duty of Care obligations in respect of that waste.

Limitations

This statement applies only in Scotland. The terms of this statement may be subject to periodical review and be changed or withdrawn in light of technological developments, regulatory or legislative changes, future government guidance or experience of its use. SEPA reserves its discretion to depart from the position outlined in this statement and to take appropriate action to avoid any risk of pollution or harm to human health or the environment.