

Press release: Make it your business to be flood resilient

The Environment Agency has launched a campaign to ensure North East businesses are prepared for flooding.

Since 1998 there has been at least one serious flood every year with businesses more likely to flood than be destroyed by fire.

And with recent events such as 2012's 'Thunder Thursday' hitting businesses hard the Environment Agency is working with them to reduce the impact of a flood.

The campaign launches with an event in Yarm next week and will culminate with an event in North Shields in October.

The Environment Agency's four Flood Resilience Community Engagement Officers for the region have already been in touch with more than 700 business across the region to raise awareness of flooding issues – more than 100 in Tyne and Wear, more than 500 in Durham and Darlington and more than 90 in Cleveland.

In Northumberland, the team worked with seven businesses during a drop-in about a potential flood scheme at Hexham Industrial Estate and 18 businesses attended a drop-in event at Prudhoe.

'It will never happen to me'

Taryn Al-mashgari, Community Engagement Officer for Tyne and Wear, said:

A common phrase I hear when out visiting businesses is 'it will never happen to me'. Some aren't even aware they are trading in an area at risk of flooding. Flooding accounts for 33% of all losses to business property. This has a huge impact on our economy.

With climate change meaning extreme weather events becoming frequent and more severe in the future it's more important than ever that businesses are prepared.

Most businesses can save between 20% and 90% on the cost of lost stock and moveable equipment by taking action now, before winter. For every £1 spent preparing for flooding £5 is saved – this is money well spent.

- The campaign launches with a 'Business Breakfast' drop-in event in Yarm which takes place at Yarm Fellowship Hall between 7.30am-9am on Wednesday 22 August.

Businesses can come along and talk to Sarah Duffy, Community Engagement

Officer for Cleveland, about their experiences of flooding and she will be helping them understand how to prepare for a flood, create a business flood group and ensure the safety of staff and customers during a flood event. Refreshments will be provided.

- This will be followed up by a community drop-in event at Redcar and Cleveland Leisure and Community Heart on Friday 24 August between 10am and 12noon.

And in October, the campaign will culminate with a big event for businesses at North Shields Fish Quay. Taryn added:

The impact of 'Thunder Thursday' on businesses across the country was estimated to be £200million, that's an extraordinary figure. There's lots that businesses can do to reduce the impact.

Things businesses can do to make them more resilient to flooding:

1. Understand the different types of flooding. Flooding can happen from the coast, river, surface water, sewer and groundwater.
2. Check their flood risk. Businesses can check if they are at risk of flooding from rivers, the coast and surface water.
3. Check they have the right level of insurance.
4. Write a flood plan.
5. Invest in flood protection measures and link up with neighbouring properties.

Press release: Light aircraft used to target illegal abstraction investigations

The Environment Agency in the East Midlands is the first area in the country to use digital imaging collected by light aircraft to put a stop to illegal abstractions from rivers and streams.

The information obtained from the operation is now helping the Environment Agency to effectively target high invasion areas and carry out targeted abstraction patrols to catch illegal abstractors and put a stop to illegal abstraction that can cause harm to the environment and wildlife.

The Environment Agency manages abstraction to balance the needs of the environment with the rights of existing lawful water users during periods of dry weather.

93 abstraction licences in the East Midlands have had restrictions placed on them in the last few weeks to reduce abstractions and 16 licence holders have been told to cease abstracting completely.

To ensure abstractors are complying with the new restrictions, Environment Officers will be carrying out high visibility patrols throughout the East Midlands to check that abstractors keep within the conditions of their licence and do not cause harm to the environment.

Steve Lawrie, Area Environment Manager at the Environment Agency, said:

Our patrols across the East Midlands aim to deter illegal abstraction and identify compliance issues where restrictions are in force, or where we are aware of environmental issues.

We are working to be flexible where possible and allow abstraction where it will not cause harm to the environment or impact other river users. We must balance the needs of farmers and other businesses with those of wildlife and other water users.

As the hot, dry weather continues we are urging everyone to use water wisely to help protect the environment and prevent the need for further water restrictions.

Anyone suspected of abstracting illegally should be reported to the Environment Agency hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

Press release: Flood sirens in Grimsby and Cleethorpes to be tested on 24 August

The Environment Agency (EA) is conducting its annual test of its flood sirens in Grimsby and Cleethorpes on Friday, 24 August.

Installed after the summer floods of 2007, 17 of the 18 sirens help the EA

warn over 25,000 households and local businesses of imminent tidal flooding while one also warns of flood risk from the river.

Testing will take place on Friday, 24 August between 10am and 12pm. If you hear the sirens during this time, you do not need to take any action. If flooding is expected on the day, the test will be rescheduled and flood warnings will be issued through the Environment Agency's free Flood Warning Service (FWS).

Environment Agency staff will be at Freshney Place shopping centre in Grimsby together with representatives from North East Lincolnshire Council between 9am and 5pm on the day of the tests. They'll be on hand to answer questions about the sirens and provide information about how to manage your flood risk, including what steps you can take to prepare for an emergency.

The sirens in Grimsby and Cleethorpes were installed over a decade ago, and since then the Environment Agency has made great strides in how it can warn people when flooding may be possible. The EA now offers a free Flood Warning Service, which provides targeted flood warnings via phone call, text or email. The EA encourages all residents in Grimsby and Cleethorpes to check their flood risk and sign up for flood warnings if they've not done so yet, by visiting www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings or by calling 0345 988 1188.

Although the Flood Warning Service is now the EA's primary warning tool, the flood sirens in Grimsby and Cleethorpes add value as they can help provide people with crucial time to prepare for flooding. The siren on the Willows Estate in Grimsby is used to warn residents about flooding from the New Cut Drain and the River Freshney, while the others warn of flooding from the Humber.

Greg Smith, Flood Resilience team leader with the Environment Agency, said:

The flood sirens we own and operate in Grimsby and Cleethorpes help us warn over 25,000 households and local businesses. It's important that we conduct these annual tests to make sure the sirens still work as they should.

Although our flood defences reduce the risk of flooding to thousands of homes and businesses in Grimsby and Cleethorpes, we can never remove the risk of flooding entirely. This is why it is crucial that we can warn people when there is a risk of flooding, by using tools such as the sirens or our free Flood Warning Service.

It is important that everyone plays their part to protect themselves from the risk of flooding. Find out what you can do to protect yourself and your family by coming to talk to us at Freshney Place on 24 August.

Cllr Matt Patrick, portfolio holder for the environment with North East

Lincolnshire Council said:

On the flood siren testing day, North East Lincolnshire Council staff and its partner Engie will be joining the Environment Agency in Freshney Place Shopping Centre between 9am and 5pm.

Officers will be available to answer any questions on flood risk and how you can prepare.

News story: Environment Agency's 'Incident Management Portal' receives international award

The Environment Agency's Incident Management (IM) Portal has been awarded a 'Special Achievement in Geographical Information Systems (GIS) Award' at the [2018 International ESRI User Conference](#) in recognition of its outstanding use of GIS technology.

Launched in October 2016 the IM Portal has already:

- Reduced the time between data capture and reporting during an incident
- Improved the Environment Agency's ability to easily share mapping internally and externally during an incident ensuring consistency
- Simplified and standardised the tools used, and the process for capturing, storing, analysing and sharing data

Catherine Wright, Director for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management said:

The Incident Management Portal is just one example of how the Environment Agency is working to improve incident response. The portal is a great example of how the Environment Agency is using technology to improve its response to environmental incidents – from everything to flooding and drought to tackling waste crime and improving biodiversity. It has revolutionised how we collect and use data during incidents by providing real-time data and images to our incident rooms across the country.

The portal has already proved invaluable during incidents and we are continuing to look at ways we can build on the system to maximise the longer term benefits from the data captured and use it to help inform future decision making. It is an honour to accept this international award on behalf of the team who have created

this innovative system.

Stuart Bonthron, Esri UK Managing Director, visited the Environment Agency office in Bristol where he presented the award.

The Incident Management Portal Team has put the Environment Agency at the forefront of this international audience.

At the conference in San Diego, Jack Dangermond, President and Founder of ESRI, said:

The work of the Environment Agency stood out from more than 100,000 other applicants and I would like to congratulate you on a job well done.

The Incident Management Portal was established following a review of the Environment Agency's mapping capabilities after the floods of winter 2015/16. The review identified the need to improve how data is acquired, shared, and used during an incident.

The Incident Management Portal is just one example of how the Environment Agency is working to improve incident response. Since the flooding of 15/16, the Environment Agency has invested £12.5 million in new flood equipment including an additional 40km of temporary barriers, 500,000 sandbags and 250 pumps, including 12 ultra-high volume pumps. There are around 6,500 trained staff across the country, ready to respond to flooding, including 500 flood support officers and the Environment Agency have awarded a new Incident Management Logistics Contract to store and deploy the temporary flood defences.

More than 1.4 million people are signed up to the Environment Agency's free flood warning service, which sends a message directly by voice message, text or email when a flood warning is issued. Over the last year the Environment Agency has partnered with mobile phone networks to automatically add thousands of mobile customers to the service and this work will continue throughout 2018.

Press release: Hoteliers and haulier fined after waste illegally dumped to extend hotel car park

Three North East men have been ordered to pay over £10,000 for illegally landfilling waste after a successful prosecution by the Environment Agency

David Bradley (57) and Alan Bradley (64), the brothers and joint owners of Hardwicke Hall Manor Hotel, near Blackhall in East Durham were fined £3,855 & £971 respectively. The haulier, Alan Waggott (53) of Howden-le-Wear, near Crook was fined £6,007 after appearing at Newton Aycliffe Magistrates Court today (15 August) where they pleaded guilty to various environmental offences.

Chris Bunting, prosecuting told the court that in September 2016 Environment Agency officers attended the hotel and found part of the car park, which is close to a watercourse, covered in various waste materials. Enquiries revealed that the edge of the car park had suffered from landslip, so the Bradleys had decided to repair the damaged area.

It is illegal to dispose of waste by landfilling without an environmental permit and Hardwicke Hall Manor Hotel had no such authorisations. Environmental permits safeguard people and the environment by placing controls on any activity that could pollute air, water or land.

During their inspection, Environment Agency officers witnessed a fully laden waste vehicle arrive on site belonging to Alan Waggott Haulage. The waste was seen to be of the same type which could be seen on the ground.

Photographs showed a wide range of waste materials which should never have been deposited in such a mixed state, at such a location where no permit was in place. Traces of bonded asbestos, a hazardous waste, were identified by officers although it was made clear that Waggott was responsible for only a fraction of the total waste material which had been used.

The court heard that Waggott was contracted to remove waste from construction sites in North Ormesby and Stockton-on-Tees. Whilst paperwork issued by Waggott claimed that this waste was to be deposited at a permitted landfill site, 36 wagon loads were in fact tipped for free at the hotel.

Having ordered tipping operations to stop and given instructions for the illegally tipped waste to be removed and disposed of at a permitted facility, a subsequent inspection by the Environment Agency found that additional waste had been deposited in the car park area.

In mitigation, John Elwood for the Bradleys showed photographs of fly tipped waste which formed part of the problem, and said that they never realised at the outset that a permit may have been needed. Ben Pegman for Waggott, confirmed that his client had acted on trust, but recognised he needed to improve his working methods to ensure he was acting lawfully.

In passing sentence, the Court said there was no doubt the incident was clearly for monetary gain.

Rachael Caldwell for the Environment Agency said:

We will not tolerate abuses of the environmental permitting system. Those who ignore environmental laws can cause serious pollution to the environment, put communities at risk and undermine legitimate

business and the investment and growth that go with it.

We hope that the sentencing handed down today acts as a deterrent to those who may think they can get away with it.

If you see or are aware of waste crime, you can report it by calling the Environment Agency's incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 or call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.