

EPD reminds recyclers that disposal licensing control and import/export permit control of waste regulated electrical equipment to start next Monday

Disposal licensing control, import and export control and disposal bans at designated waste disposal facilities of regulated electrical and electronic equipment (REE) (including waste air-conditioners, refrigerators, washing machines, televisions, computers, printers, scanners and monitors) under the Waste Disposal Ordinance (WDO) will come into effect next Monday (December 31). The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (December 24) once again reminded the relevant practitioners in the recycling industry and second-hand shops to get themselves ready to avoid contravening the law.

Starting from December 31 this year, landfills and other designated waste disposal facilities (such as refuse transfer stations) will no longer receive and handle waste REE. Unless exempted, any person who is engaged in the storage, treatment, reprocessing or recycling (but not repair) of waste REE must obtain a waste disposal licence (e-WDL) issued by the EPD under the law. A permit issued by the EPD is also required for the import and export of waste REE.

Staff of the EPD recently paid another round of visits to recycling sites and reminded the trade that if they are uncertain whether an e-WDL can be obtained before December 31 this year, they must take immediate action to properly clear up and stop receiving waste REE, so as to avoid contravening the law.

An EPD spokesman stressed that there will be no grace period upon the commencement of relevant control measures on December 31 and the department will step up inspections and take enforcement action against non-compliant operations. Under the WDO, any person involved in the disposal (including storage) of REE without a licence, or the import or export of REE without a permit, is liable to a fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment upon first conviction.

The spokesman said that according to the WDO, the following operations are exempted from obtaining a waste disposal licence, but must still abide by all other environmental legislation and applicable legislation:

- (1) disposal of waste REE (that is not chemical waste) on land or premises with an area of not more than 100 m²;
- (2) storage of waste REE with a total volume of not more than 50 m³; or
- (3) storage of waste REE on premises located inside a multi-storey building.

The EPD also appeals to those involved in the resale of second-hand REE to properly inspect and repair such appliances, and to ensure that they are operable and label them. Such appliances should also be properly packaged to avoid damage during storage or transportation. For details on how to distinguish between waste REE and second-hand REE, please refer to the EPD website: www.epd.gov.hk/epd/eng/2ndhandREE.

The Producer Responsibility Scheme on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment covering the REE came into effect on August 1 this year. With the commencement of relevant control measures under the WDO on December 31 this year, locally generated waste REE will be properly treated and recycled, and turned into resources. This will provide a long-term solution to potential land contamination and environmental problems arising from mishandling REE during delivery, storage and dismantling processes, marking another important milestone in Hong Kong's waste reduction and recycling efforts.