

News story: Government introduces tough new measure to prevent acid attacks

The change, which came into force today (1 November), is one of the 61 commitments within the government's Serious Violence Strategy, which range from early intervention and prevention through to tough law enforcement measures, to make our communities safer.

It is now a criminal offence for members of the public to possess sulphuric acid above 15% concentration without a licence, with offenders facing a 2-year prison sentence and an unlimited fine.

Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability, Victoria Atkins said:

Acid attacks are utterly appalling crimes and we are determined to put a stop to them.

Sulphuric acid can be a very dangerous substance. We are taking this threat seriously and are making it harder to possess and purchase corrosive substances.

The changes we have introduced will help to ensure that sulphuric acid is kept away from those who mean harm. I am sure that all retailers will enforce the new restrictions.

Since 1 July 2018, under changes to the Poisons Act, members of the public wishing to import, acquire or use sulphuric acid above 15% have required a Home Office licence.

Applicants need a legitimate purpose for a licence and must disclose any relevant health issues and previous criminal offences. Retailers failing to check for a licence face 2 years in prison and an unlimited fine.

The move has restricted public access to products, such as high strength drain cleaners, that contain this dangerous corrosive substance. This has not impacted professional users.

From 1 November, individuals who are in possession of sulphuric acid, above a concentration of 15% and without a licence, should dispose of the substance according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Professional users do not need a licence providing they are using sulphuric acid for the purposes connected with their trade or business. They may be asked to provide evidence of this and explain the intended use of the chemical. It is, however, their responsibility to comply with these new regulations. Businesses also have an obligation to report suspicious

transactions, significant losses or thefts.