

North East households urged not to become 'accidental' waste criminals this Christmas

Waste carriers, like other licensed trades, are required to register and operate in line with a set of rules that protect the environment and their customers. These rules require them to dispose of waste in the right place, store it safely and keep accurate records of its transfer and disposal.

There has been recent concerns about the number of 'man and van' adverts and self-promotion on Facebook and other social media platforms offering to take away people's rubbish.

If these traders don't have a waste carriers' licence, there is no guarantee rubbish will be disposed of safely and responsibly at an authorised site. Instead, it could end up dumped on the side of the road or burned in a field. What's more, because the person who created the rubbish is legally responsible for it, it is they who could face criminal charges.

David Edwardson the Environment Agency's Enforcement Leader for the North East, said:

"Rogue traders using social media to exploit people into parting with their waste cheaply are regarded as the new door steppers. People are then discovering their waste has been fly-tipped in a country lane or beside the road. These illegal waste carriers undermine legitimate businesses, undercut their prices and blight the environment. They will step up their activities over the festive season as they know people will be looking to dispose of unwanted items after Christmas.

"We want people to take three steps to check whether the collector has a waste carriers' licence from the Environment Agency: ask where the rubbish will end up, don't pay cash and insist on a receipt, then record the details of the vehicle used to take the rubbish away.

"If people suspect criminal activity, they should report it on our national incident hotline 0800 807060 or anonymously through CrimeStoppers on 0800 555 111 and give as much detail as possible. Let's work together to stamp out waste crime and protect our urban spaces and beautiful countryside."

Everyone has a duty of care to ensure their waste is disposed of legally. Failing to meet that requirement means people could be held responsible if their waste is fly-tipped or otherwise illegally disposed of. In the event of a court prosecution individuals could receive an unlimited fine and/or a £400 Fixed Penalty Notices.

People should check the festive opening times for their local Waste Recycling Centre if they decide to discard any items of the Christmas and New Year

period.

Before hiring someone to remove waste, check their credentials online at <https://environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers>