

Press release: Environment Agency warns of illegal waste being dumped empty commercial units

Empty industrial units across the country are being targeted by waste criminals to dispose of thousands of tonnes of illegal waste.

The growing trend sees criminals pose as legitimate tenants to rent properties used to store illegal waste. Once discovered, landlords, property managers and farmers are burdened with thousands of pounds in clear up costs and face possible criminal prosecution, fines and even custodial sentences for failure to operate without an environmental permit.

The waste, mainly made up of potentially hazardous materials, poses a serious pollution and fire risk and undermines legitimate business.

With hundreds of commercial properties across the country thought to be empty, the Environment Agency is calling for landlords to be extra vigilant when letting out their properties. The regulator is also calling on businesses, organisations and individuals to manage their waste responsibly to prevent it from getting into criminal hands in the first place.

During the period Dec 2016 – Nov 2017 the Environment Agency investigated the dumping of 18,244 bales of waste – each bale being approximately 1 ton. It's estimated that at a low end price of £70 per bale this would amount to £1,277,000 for correct disposal of the waste.

The Environment Agency reveals the top four land types which are most susceptible to illegal dumping. The land type descriptions key dump sites are:

- Farms 34%
- Industrial Unit 24%
- Abandoned factory 10%
- Derelict site 7%

Nicky Lawton, Deputy Director – National Enforcement Service, said:

Unsuspecting landlords and property managers are failing foul of waste criminals and as a result are being made to pick up hefty bills to clear up the waste – often running into the hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Landlords can avoid this by carrying out checks to prospective tenants to ensure their sites will not be used as part of an illegal waste operation.

Waste crime, which costs the economy £604 million a year, is a

serious problem that we're using all our available resources and powers to curb.

Landlords and property managers are urged to take the following steps to avoid being a victim of waste crime:

- Carry out rigorous checks on prospective new tenants.
- Check any empty land and property regularly and make sure it is secure.
- It is illegal to store waste on your land without the required permits. You may be committing an offence by allowing waste to be stored on your land or property without the relevant permissions and you could be liable to prosecution and the cost of removing the waste.
- Landlords should check before signing a contract that the contract complies with regulations. You can view whether a potential tenant holds the correct permit to carry out waste operations at [public register](#)
- The offer of payment to temporarily store waste is a scam, the waste will likely never be collected.
- Be vigilant and report any unusual behaviour. If you are suspicious of prospective tenants please contact us for more information and advice.
- If you are approached to store baled waste, even on a short term basis, refuse the material and call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

The Environment Agency's Prevention & Disruption teams are working hard to address waste crime, exercising new regulatory powers to lock up and block access to illegal waste sites.