

SEPA cracks down on illegal dumpers advertising on social media

SEPA enforcement team targets criminals and chancers using social media to sell illegal waste services / Regulator reminds waste companies that compliance with the law is non-negotiable / Illegal operators contributing to fly-tipping and other illegal waste activity / Public are reminded – don't engage the services of people who are not authorised.

Chancers advertising illegal waste collections on social media sites are being targeted by Scotland's environmental regulator in a new digital clampdown.

Household recycling centres are now open but many have restrictions in place – and people may still have bulky items and excess waste that cannot be transported. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) is warning those trying to make a quick buck from the current situation by operating illegally that they are firmly in the spotlight, and that direct warnings would be sent to those not registered with SEPA placing adverts – with fines of up to £5,000 for non-compliance.

SEPA's specialist enforcement team has been working alongside partners Police Scotland, Zero Waste Scotland and local authorities throughout the lockdown period to tackle waste crime across Scotland.

These specialist officers are monitoring sites like Facebook and Gumtree to catch waste criminals as part of a wider effort to deter illegal activity across the waste management chain. SEPA is very clear that those who deliberately flout the rules will face the uncompromising regulator their behaviour deserves.

Jennifer Shearer, Head of Enforcement at the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, said:

“We know that illegal activity places further stress on legitimate operators – especially where services are being pushed through social media and other channels.

“Through our monitoring of social media we've unfortunately seen a number of instances of couriers and so-called white van men taking the opportunity to offer an unauthorised waste collection service and then often dumping in public spaces or remote parts of countryside – creating an unsafe environmental hazard and an eyesore for the local community.

“Having witnessed an increase in adverts of this kind in recent months, our digital disruption is designed to take those operating illegally, out of the market.”

Where enforcement officers identify that adverts and messages are being

distributed by carriers not registered with SEPA, they will make contact to warn them that they are operating illegally. If they do not apply for a registration or stop activities, SEPA will take enforcement action which could see them subjected to fines or criminal prosecution.

There is also an important role for the public, with a warning that the use of unlicensed waste collectors could result in waste contributing to fly-tipping and other illegal activity.

“Don’t engage the services of people who are not authorised,” Shearer explains. “Remember, services that sound too good to be true often are, and could lead to your waste being illegally fly-tipped or disposed of by other illegitimate means.

“Anyone offering to take your waste away should be able to provide a waste carrier registration number and tell you the named facility they will take the waste to – if they can’t provide this information, don’t allow them to take your waste.

“Now more than ever, Scots are recognising the importance of local services like recycling and the part we all play in correctly managing our waste. You have the responsibility to take care of your waste and if we trace it back to you we can take enforcement action against you too. We don’t want people to be put in that situation so make sure that anyone who takes your waste for disposal is properly accredited.”

Roseanna Cunningham, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, added:

“We owe a massive thank you to all those in the waste industry who are working hard to keep services running in challenging circumstances. Illegal activities such as flytipping adds to the burden of those who continue to deliver essential services.

“SEPA has a vital role in regulating and monitoring waste carrier services and I welcome the proactive approach they are taking to target unregistered waste businesses. It is vital that individuals take responsibility for checking that the waste carrier they use is registered and will dispose of waste correctly.”

Visiting the new website – managingourwaste.scot – from SEPA, Zero Waste Scotland and partners, you will find updates and advice on how to manage waste. As part of Scotland’s campaign to help manage waste during current restrictions the site also explains how you can help to tackle fly-tipping. SEPA is also offering support to help those managing our waste operate against the challenges of coronavirus.

Top three Dos and Don’ts of Household Waste Disposal

1. DO use common sense. If you are approached out of the blue with an offer to dispose of your waste so quickly and cheaply it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
2. DON’T entrust your waste with someone if they are unable to tell you

basic information like their waste carrier registration number and the named site they are taking the waste to.

3. DO take responsibility for who you give waste to – if we trace illegally disposed of waste back to you then you could be liable for enforcement action too.

Ends

Notes to editors

Links for further information