Water checklist
for food and drink businesses

Use this checklist to see if you are complying with water regulations and good practice guidelines in Northern Ireland.

Water use

Check whether you need an abstraction or impoundment licence from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. If you have a licence, make sure you meet all of its conditions.

- ☐ If you use a private water supply within your business either as an alternative to, or along with, the mains water supply for supplying drinking water, or within a food manufacturing process, you should contact the Drinking Water Inspectorate to get your supply registered (privatewatersupplies@daera-ni.gov.uk). (A private water supply is any supply of water used within a premises that is not the public water provided by Northern Ireland Water Limited)
- ☐ Monitor and record your water use.
- ☐ Develop a water use reduction plan.
- ☐ Inspect pipework and hoses regularly and repair any leaks as soon as possible.
- ☐ When replacing equipment, consider water efficient technology.

NetRegs: Water use and abstraction [www.netregs.org.uk/libraryoftopics/water/wateruseabstraction.aspx]

Information on the Use of Private Water Supplies: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/private-water-supplies

Discharges to water and sewer

- ☐ Make sure you have written consent from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency before you discharge anything other than uncontaminated water to surface waters or ground waters.
- ☐ Make sure you have permission from your water and sewerage operator to discharge to the foul sewer, ie a trade effluent consent or trade effluent agreement.
- ☐ Comply with all of the conditions in your consent.
- ☐ Comply with all monitoring requirements in your consent.
- ☐ Even if monitoring isn't required by your consent it is good practice to be aware of what you are discharging. You may want to monitor the main components of your discharges, such as: flow rate, pH, temperature, suspended
  - ☐ solids, FOG (fats, oil and grease) and biochemical oxygen demand (BOD)/chemical oxygen demand (COD).

- Make sure you know where all of your effluents go, no matter how small the volume, eg compressor and boiler blowdown, cooling water, compactor run-off, steam condensates, pressure testing liquids.
- You must treat liquid that is contaminated with hazardous substances, such as oils or chemicals, as hazardous waste.
- Check that your cleaners and contractors know how to dispose of wastewater properly.
- Review your discharges to see if you can reduce or eliminate any of them.

NetRegs: Discharges to water and sewer [www.netregs.org.uk/libraryoftopics/water/dischargestowatersewer.aspx]

Wastewater treatment

- If you have a wastewater treatment system (eg trade effluent treatment plant, septic tank, package plant or oil separator) make someone responsible for operating it and regularly inspecting and maintaining it.
- Comply with all of the conditions in your consent for your wastewater treatment plant, eg stay within your specified limits for flow rate, pH, temperature, suspended solids, FOG and BOD/COD.
- Deal with all sludges and screenings as waste.
- Minimise the strength and variability of the incoming flow through good housekeeping and control of your processes.
- Consider using pigging systems to minimise the amount of cleaning products you need. A pig (pipeline inspection gauge) is a solid plug that is pushed down a pipeline to clean it out and mobilise settled solids.

NetRegs: Effluent treatment plants and drainage [www.netregs.org.uk/libraryoftopics/water/effluenttmentplants-food.aspx]

Site drainage

Keep surface water from your site uncontaminated.
Discharge **uncontaminated water** to a surface water drain or watercourse, rather than a foul sewer.

- Check that your site is drained correctly and complies with the conditions in your consents.
- Make sure that:
- only clean water, such as roof drainage, drains to surface water drains
- all contaminated water, such as sewage and trade effluent, drains to foul drains.
- Check that you have an up-to-date and accurate site drainage plan available on site.
- Consider implementing sustainable drainage systems (SUDS).

- Colour code your drains and manhole covers: blue for surface water drains and red for foul water drains.
- Have an inspection and maintenance plan for drains and drainage channels to prevent blockages.
- Keep damaging raw materials and products out of the site drainage system:
- Use grate covers and catch pots for floor drains to prevent food scraps entering drains and blocking them.
- Fit grease traps to drains to prevent sewer blockages.
- Inspect and maintain these covers and traps regularly.
- Dispose of the materials caught in the traps and catch pots as waste.

NetRegs: Managing your site's discharges and drainage [www.netregs.org.uk/libraryoftopics/water/yardrun-off.aspx]

Preventing pollution

- Store hazardous liquids and substances that are potentially harmful to the environment securely within a bund (eg oils, cleaning chemicals, milk). Make sure they are clearly labelled.
- Designate, mark and isolate your loading and unloading areas from the surface water drainage system. Consider using catch pits, sumps with isolating valves, raised kerbs or drain covers to protect surface water drains.
- Supervise all deliveries.
- If you deliver or receive liquid products, make sure delivery pipes are fitted with automatic cut-off valves to prevent over fill.
- Label all storage areas and tanks correctly and clearly.

- Locate your storage areas away from watercourses and surface water drains.
- Make sure your storage areas and tanks are secure and protected from vandalism.
- Train staff on how to prevent pollution, such as applying cleaning chemicals safely and efficiently.
- Carry out a risk assessment of accidents that may happen on your site and have a pollution incident response plan for dealing with pollution incidents.
- Plan how you will contain firewater if there is a fire.
- Make sure spill kits are easily accessible within any high risk areas of your site.
- Check that your spill kits contain suitable containment equipment for the type of incident that might occur on your site.
- Train staff in how to respond to a pollution incident and how to use the equipment.
- Test your plan by carrying out simulations and exercises.

NetRegs: Pollution incident response planning [www.netregs.org.uk/libraryoftopics/water/preventingwaterpollution.aspx]

Further information

Find guidance on your other environmental impacts on the NetRegs website.
NetRegs: Food and drink processing
[www.netregs.org.uk/businesssectors/fooddrinkprocessing.aspx]

Use our waste checklist to see if you are complying with waste regulations in Scotland.
NetRegs: Waste checklist for food and drink businesses
[www.netregs.org.uk/pdf/
foodanddrinkwastechecklistScotland.pdf]

Keep up to date with any changes in the laws that affect you by signing up for NetRegs free email updates.
NetRegs environmental legislation updates
[www.netregs.org.uk/aboutnetregs/businessenvironmentalupdates.aspx]