

Press release: Have you checked your heating oil tank?

With an autumnal nip in the air, the Environment Agency is urging anyone with a domestic heating oil tank to check their tank is in a good state of repair before getting heating oil delivered for the winter.

Leaks and spills from a domestic heating tank can be difficult and expensive to clean up; leaked oil can end up in groundwater supplies and drains, many of which lead directly into rivers, streams, lakes and even garden ponds.

If oil does get into drains it could pollute watercourses; harming livestock, wildlife and plants. Our vital drinking water can also come from the same surface and groundwater supplies so protection is important.

Oil is poisonous to fish, other wildlife and smothers plants – just two litres of oil could seriously pollute the volume of fresh water needed to fill an Olympic-size swimming pool.

Steve Brown from the Environment Agency said:

Heating oil can cause serious problems if it gets into the water environment.

The clean-up costs could be tens of thousands of pounds; and these costs fall to the owner of the leaking tank. These costs are not always covered by household insurance policies. A serious case of land contamination from a leaking oil tank could also severely affect the value of property in the area.

This is why it's vital that oil is only ever stored in tanks that are in good condition. Both the tank and its pipe work should be regularly inspected and people should never buy more oil than they can safely store.

If anyone does find a spill, please contact us straight away so that we can reduce the impact on the environment.

To report an oil spill people should contact the Environment Agency's 24-hour incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

Press release: Illegal Waste Carriers to be stopped in their tracks

The Environment Agency and Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) have officially agreed to carry out joint operations across England to cut the transportation of illegal waste and to improve road safety.

The memorandum of understanding signed today by chief executives, Sir James Bevan and Gareth Llewellyn will see the Environment Agency and the DVSA using their combined enforcement powers to tackle the transportation of waste to illegal or poorly-performing permitted sites.

The agreement will involve:

- DVSA staff located within EA teams to ensure a coordinated and effective approach,
- sharing of information to increase the effectiveness of roadside enforcement on waste industry vehicles up and down the country;
- providing enforcement teams with intelligence relating to waste industry operators
- identifying high risk or illegal goods vehicle operators involved in waste transport
- reducing the number of seriously and serially non-compliant waste industry vehicles on England's roads.

The Environment Agency and DVSA have worked together for a number of years to stop waste crime, making sure companies are operating legally and vehicle safety is improved. This agreement will enable the two organisations to tackle waste crime more efficiently by intervening earlier in the waste chain and using prevention tactics.

Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive, Environment Agency said:

We want to protect people and communities from the impact that vehicle and waste crime can have and create a level playing field for all operators.

This Memorandum of Understanding with the DVSA will help both organisations work with the waste industry to improve compliance and vehicle and driver safety standards.

To help us with this, we are encouraging people to check with the Environment Agency if the company they are employing to take their waste away is a fully registered waste carrier.

DVSA's Chief Executive, Gareth Llewellyn, said:

DVSA priority is to protect you from unsafe drivers and vehicles. I am delighted that we will be working with the Environment Agency to tackle those who illegally transport waste. By combining our enforcement powers and intelligence we'll be able to work with those who break the rules more effectively.

DVSA traffic examiners will issue fines to those waste carriers we find to be operating in an unsafe manner. These operators are putting themselves and other road users at risk and pose a danger to our environment.

Anyone who suspects that an operator is transporting waste in an unsafe manner should report their concerns to DVSA on 0300 123 9000 or enquiries@dvsa.gov.uk.

Members of the public can check if a waste company is registered with the Environment Agency on 03708 506 506 and at www.gov.uk/waste-carrier-or-broker-registration.

Press release: United Utilities fined £666,000 for polluting river with raw sewage

United Utilities has been ordered to pay a fine of £666,000 in after pleading guilty to polluting a river with untreated sewage effluent in Greater Manchester.

The Environment Agency took the prosecution against the water company after sewage polluted the River Medlock having a significant impact on fish population and water quality over a distance of four kilometres.

It was a member of the public who initially reported the pollution in the River Medlock at Park Bridge, Ashton-Under-Lyne on 14 October 2014 to the Environment Agency's incident hotline.

Officers found that the pollution had deposited grey sludge on the River Medlock's bed over four kilometres resulting in significant impact on fish stocks and water quality in the river.

In total United Utilities estimated that 21,700 cubic metres of sewage discharged into the water.

A report commissioned by United Utilities found that the incident had a detrimental impact on brown trout and had the potential to reduce the fish

population the following year.

When the pollution was first reported, United Utilities Officers were attending a high-level alarm at the Sewage Tank and had identified a fault which meant the tank was not emptying to the foul sewer network as quickly as it should have been. This resulted in untreated raw sewage entering Glodwick Brook and the River Medlock, which is contrary to the permit conditions in place.

United Utilities admitted that their control centre had received an alarm about the discharge three days before, but the fault had not been recognised.

In sentencing on Friday 8 September, HH Judge Potter said the company's negligence had resulted in significant harm to the River Medlock.

Mark Easedale, Environment Manager for Greater Manchester, said:

The Environment Agency take pollution incidents very seriously and this case should send a strong message to companies of the potential consequences if they damage the environment.

We appreciate reports from the public to the Environment Agency's Incident Hotline on 0800 80 70 60 which allows our staff to respond swiftly to protect people, wildlife and the environment – also to investigate environmental offences which may have occurred.

The sewage that was discharged had a significant impact on the River Medlock, killing brown trout, which are a key indicator species of good water quality. The case demonstrates just how important it is that water companies and wider industries maintain their equipment in order to prevent pollution to the environment.

We work closely with United Utilities who have undertaken extensive work to reduce their impact on the environment. It's important that we continue to work with partners in order to safeguard the environment and ensure such incidents are avoided in the future.

In mitigation United Utilities told the court of the steps they had taken to prevent a reoccurrence of this incident.

The company were fined a total of £666,000 and ordered to pay costs of over £32,000.

[Press release: Rod licensing blitz](#)

identifies 23 offenders

Environment Agency Officers led a series of rod licence enforcement patrols around various sites in Essex and Norfolk, on the back of intelligence received. They were joined by colleagues from Essex and Norfolk Police forces, the Broads Authority and volunteer bailiffs from the Angling Trust.

Over a total of three days (6, 9 and 10 September 2017), eight Essex fisheries were checked, and one river stretch patrolled in Norfolk (the River Bure).

Officers checked dozens of anglers, stressing the importance of buying a rod licence and explaining how the income is reinvested in fisheries. A total of 224 rod licences were checked and 23 offenders identified (a 10.26% evasion rate).

Lesley Robertson, Enforcement Team Leader at the Environment Agency, said:

These checks were badged under the name Operation Springfield II. The Operation focused on rod licence evasion and raising awareness of the need for anglers to purchase and renew their rod licences.

Our Officers patrol the watercourses all year round, including holidays and weekends. Those who avoid buying a rod licence and are found fishing illegally may face prosecution and a hefty fine. Anglers should ensure they are properly licensed before going out to enjoy this worthwhile hobby.

Essex Police Rural and Heritage Crime Officer, PC Andrew Long, said:

Like other forces across the UK, Essex Police have joined with the Environment Agency and Angling Trust to work together and tackle criminality surrounding theft of fish and unlawful fishing.

This has an impact on one of the country's most popular pastimes, with more than 1.5 million people buying rod licences every year.

Taking part in unlawful fishing can have a detrimental effect on the environment so it's important for us to work in partnership with the Environment Agency and ensure everyone has the correct licence to do this.

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