

# PRESS RELEASE



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## Environment Permitting Regulations – Permit to Discharge

Many dwellings within the countryside are not connected to a sewer due to their rural location. This waste is therefore treated by installing septic tanks, cesspools or other small private sewage treatment plants.

To govern the waste and discharge that is created the Environment Agency combined with various other bodies has set out that by 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012, all discharges from septic tanks and sewage treatment plants will have to be registered with the Environment Agency under a Permit to Discharge (previously a Consent to Discharge was required but changed on the 6<sup>th</sup> April 2010). This policy applies to new and existing systems. However if a consent to discharge has already been obtained no new application will be required.

This is part of a continuing government programme devised to improve discharge regulations and the administrative process concerning environmental protection and health issues within England and Wales. All sewage treatment plants now for sale must have been tested and hold an appropriate certificate.

Alongside the Permit to Discharge regulation, an exemption scheme has also been introduced, whereby qualifying systems will be deemed to not create a pollution threat if correctly maintained and operated.

The exemptions from Permit to Discharge can now be registered, free of charge, by the homeowners via an online or hard copy form. However, the system will have to fit in with the strict environmental regulations criteria. Exemption can be applied for if anyone is intending to discharge 5 cubic meters per day or less to surface water via a sewage treatment, or 2 cubic metres per day or less to ground water via septic tanks/sewage treatment plants. Systems which fit within these criteria will be eligible for the exemption from Permit to Discharge. If it is not found to be exempt then a charge can occur and a Permit to Discharge will still be required.

Alastair Wilson of BCM commented, "The exemptions and permits must be clearly determined before an application is made and I would always advise homeowners to seek advice if they are unsure'. Homeowners should be aware that they only have until the end of the year to register otherwise they face a £20,000 fine."

To maintain the exemptions status the owner must abide by the regulations and make regular inspections, maintenance, repairs and removal of excess sludge. This must all be recorded to continue to comply with the exemption.

Further information from BCM on 01962 763900 or from the Environment Agency ([www.environmental-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environmental-agency.gov.uk))

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