

## What are you doing with plasterboard?

We have put together this guidance document to highlight the key things to consider when dealing with plasterboard and other gypsum based waste products and to ensure you and your customers are complying with the law. Any gypsum based products can decompose when disposed of with other biodegradable materials, releasing pollutants that affect air quality and can lead to public health issues.

### What is the law?

**It is illegal to dispose of gypsum based waste at landfill sites where it will be mixed with biodegradable materials.**

The Landfill Directive, which governs all aspects of landfill management, states that **‘non-hazardous gypsum-based waste should only be disposed of in landfills for non-hazardous waste in cells where no biodegradable waste is accepted.’**

- Plasterboard is the primary type of gypsum based waste and is therefore not permitted in a general use landfill.
- Any gypsum based waste sent to landfill must be deposited in a separate, self-contained mono-cell specifically designed for high sulphate wastes.

### What is being put in your skips and containers?

We know that most operators keep a close eye on everything that comes and goes from their sites, but if your customers are not always clear with you then materials may slip through the net. There are a few steps to consider to make sure plasterboard isn't getting mixed with other wastes - you might already be doing these.

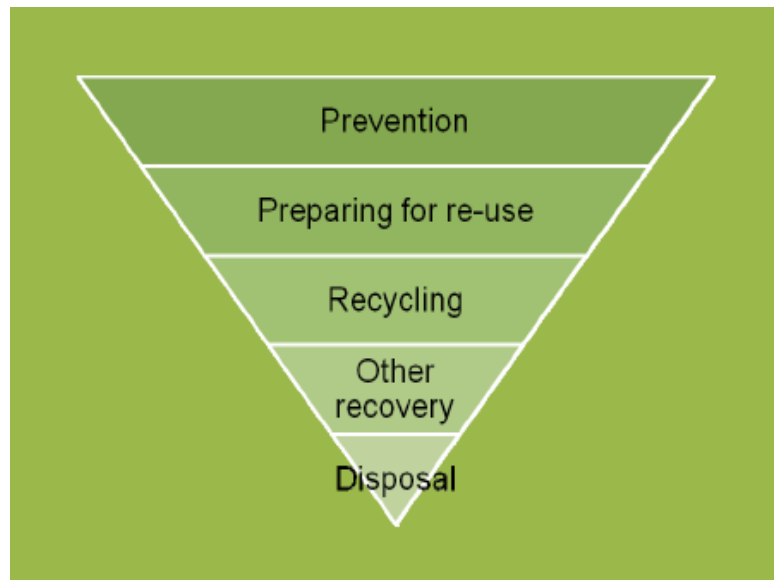
- 1) Ask all customers if they will have any plasterboard waste from the work they're doing.** If they say yes advise them that it will need to be contained separately and cannot be mixed with other waste.
- 2) Make sure that your customers understand that separate skips and containers for plasterboard must be covered** and not contaminated with other types of waste. Do likewise with any containers at amenity sites or transfer stations.
- 3) Explain to your customers why gypsum based materials need to be separated** and the requirement to manage them correctly (see below for more information on problems with plasterboard).
- 4) Make sure all waste transfer notes or consignment notes accurately record the waste type.** Paperwork should provide an accurate record of waste coming into and out of your site and there shouldn't be discrepancies in a type of waste entering or leaving your premises. Generally all plasterboard entering your site should be leaving your site on the same waste codes - 17 08 01 for hazardous or 17 08 02 for non-hazardous.



The producer of any gypsum based waste has a duty of care to ensure the waste is handled appropriately, giving full consideration to the waste hierarchy.

The waste hierarchy ranks waste management options according to what is best for the environment. Waste transfer station operators are responsible for ensuring as much waste as possible is recycled before consideration is given to disposal. This means that priority should always be given to opportunities for recycling and re-use.

Manufacturers and specialist waste companies offer take back and recycling schemes for gypsum based waste. These can be the best route to disposal, either for you or your customers – they are more cost effective, better for the environment and easier to manage.



## Recycle for the environment

Gypsum based products decompose when mixed with biodegradable waste and release hydrogen sulphide. If this escapes into the environment it drastically reduces air quality. It is colourless but has a characteristic odour of rotten eggs. Human health can be seriously compromised even at low levels of exposure, often causing feelings of nausea and headaches. Longer term exposure can lead to ongoing health issues. Landfill sites in England are often a cause for complaint due to the odour released by gypsum based products that have found their way into, for example, trommel fines and a cell not designed for gypsum.

## Separate and Recycle for your business

Ensuring gypsum is separately collected is cost effective. Cost penalties can be imposed on a customer if gypsum is hidden in the bottom of a skip, these costs are incurred when you have the impossible task of separating out smashed up plasterboard. On the other hand, recycling gypsum is cost effective and involves no higher rate landfill fees for the use of mono-cells.

Ensuring gypsum stays out of your waste fines means a better, more stable quality of fines and a higher likelihood of meeting the lower rate of landfill tax for the deposit of your fines.

## Have a questions or want more information?

You can get in touch with your dedicated regulation officer or our Misdescription of waste officer using the details below:

harriet.miller@environment-agency.gov.uk

Date: 24 November 2021