

Technical Competency Scheme Frequently Asked Questions

Why has Technical Competence changed?

As part of the Environmental Permitting Programme we consulted on the specific need for waste operators to demonstrate technical competence. Consultees supported the requirement but indicated they wanted some improvements.

We invited industry to develop schemes to replace the statutory system of Certificates of Technical competence (CoTCs) and Environment Agency assessment. Two schemes were developed, one by CIWM / Wamitab and another by ESA / EU Skills. Both schemes were consulted on in July 2007.

What is the current position?

It was originally intended that new schemes would be introduced in April 2008 but this proved not to be possible. The CIWM / Wamitab scheme received approval in December 2008, the ESA / EU Skills scheme is still under consideration. Additional schemes can be developed and submitted for approval at any time.

But right now there is only one approved scheme

That's correct. But there's no barrier to other schemes receiving approval in future and no limit to the number of schemes that can be approved. Operators can choose to demonstrate their technical competence by following any one of the approved schemes. There is no monopoly.

So when did the change take place?

The CIWM / Wamitab scheme was approved on 22 December 2008. Since this was during the Christmas period it was decided that the scheme would take effect from 5 January 2009. All applications received on or after this date are required use the new scheme.

How does this affect existing technically competent people?

If you were technically competent under the old system you continue to be technically competent. This applies to CoTC holders, people who passed an Environment Agency assessment, and those deemed competent under previous arrangements.

Because existing competence is carried over, there is no immediate need to do anything. But you will need to sit and pass a continuing competence assessment before 1 March 2011 (more details later).

How are permit applications affected by the change?

Applications for new permits, transfers, and in some cases variations will need to be supported by evidence of technical competence in accordance with the CIWM/Wamitab scheme. Environment Agency assessments will no longer be routinely available.

Why does the charging scheme still include a charge for assessments?

In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary for us to carry out a technical competence assessment. This may happen if the waste activity is not covered by any of the approved schemes. Since we have a duty to recover costs for the work we do a charge is included in the charging scheme.

I applied before 5 January but would like to use the new scheme

You can, although you may choose to use the old Wamitab system if you prefer. You can use the new scheme instead of relying on an Environment Agency assessment. You can also use the new Environmental Permit Operator Certificate (EPOC) and Vocational Related Qualification (VRQ) arrangements. If you need further information contact your permitting officer.

How is the new scheme different?

All waste activities are classed as either low, medium or high risk. The level of risk determines the qualification required. Details can be found in Annex 1 of the CIWM / Wamitab scheme.

Operators can still choose National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) to demonstrate competence. The NVQs are themselves sufficient to demonstrate competence, although individuals may still wish to register with Wamitab to receive a CoTC.

Two new qualifications have been developed for the new scheme. An EPOC is offered for low risk activities and for operators wanting to benefit from a grace period. A VRQ is offered for medium risk activities. Both require attendance on training courses followed by an assessment.

What about grace periods?

Arrangements for grace periods have been changed but they are still available. Check the new scheme for details.

If you have already passed an Environment Agency interim assessment and received two years to achieve full competence this grace period will be honoured. However there will be no extension to the two years if you join a new scheme.

Different schemes may have different arrangement for grace periods.

What is continuing competence?

The waste management industry has changed a lot in recent years and continues to develop as new legislation, technologies, and techniques are introduced. It is important that knowledge and skills keep pace. Many professions have adopted systems for continued professional development, and we have agreed that this is necessary part of all new waste management technical competence schemes.

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The continuing competence requirement is that all operators show, on a regular basis, that they understand the changes that have taken place within the waste industry. The way this is done may vary from scheme to scheme, but continuing competence must be demonstrated at least every two years.

What do I need to do about continuing competence?

The CIWM / Wamitab scheme requires technically competent people to pass an assessment. A continuing competence syllabus has been developed and will be available before 1 March 2009, and candidates will have two years, until 1 March 2011, to pass the assessment.

You may wish to prepare by yourself, or to attend refresher courses as they become available. Trade organisations are encouraged to help members by developing learning packages. When you feel you are ready just book a place at an approved assessment centre and turn up on the day. Passing the assessment means that your competence remains valid until 1 March 2013. If you fail you can retake the assessment at any time before the deadline.

If individuals do not pass the assessment by 1 March 2011 their technical competence lapses. Operators should be mindful that if their technically competent manager fails to pass the assessment they will be required to make alternative arrangements.

Must a technically competent person be on site all the time?

No. Our minimum attendance guidance has been updated but the attendance requirements are very similar. The amount of time a technically competent person needs to be on site depends on the type of site and the performance of the operator. Guidance on this will be available shortly.

Where do I get information about approved schemes?

Approved schemes are listed on the Environmental Permitting pages of the [Defra website](#) and in chapter 8 of the Environmental Permitting Core Guidance. If you have questions about the schemes you should contact the scheme providers.

There is currently one approved scheme managed by CIWM and Wamitab. Details can be found at www.ciwm.co.uk or www.wamitab.org.uk or phone CIWM on 01604 620426 or Wamitab on 01604 231950 for further information.

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