

## Waste Electrical & Electronic Equipment Regulations (WEEE)

Computers and electronic equipment have revolutionised the way in which we work, socialise and interact in a way that no other invention has done before. However, computer technology changes daily and goes out of date quickly. Old electronic equipment is replaced within years of production. This has led to a massive amount of electrical and electronic waste produced, and that has led to Government regulation. To put the problem into context, electronic equipment currently generates 1.8 million tonnes of waste annually.

Enforced since January 2007, the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations (WEEE) were produced in order to counteract this growing stockpile of old and discarded electronic equipment by addressing recycling and recovery services.

The WEEE regulations are aimed at businesses that:

- manufacture or import electrical or electronic equipment
- distribute electrical or electronic equipment
- collect electrical or electronic waste from your customers for treatment or disposal
- operate a waste treatment facility
- export electrical or electronic waste
- generate any electrical or electronic waste

The last bullet point captures most businesses. You will need to comply with the WEEE Regulations if you generate, handle or dispose of waste that falls under one of ten categories of WEEE:

1. Large household appliances
2. Small household appliances
3. IT and telecommunications equipment
4. Consumer equipment
5. Lighting equipment
6. Electrical and electronic tools
7. Toys, leisure and sports equipment
8. Medical devices
9. Monitoring and control equipment
10. Automatic dispensers.

The aim of WEEE is to eradicate the disposal of electronic equipment that may cause damage to the environment as well as to ensure that land fill sites aren't overflowing with electronic equipment that can be re-used. This applies to producers of large and small household appliances including fridges, washing machines, TV's, kettles as well as both household and commercial IT and telecommunications equipment computers and mobile phones, lighting, power tools, leisure and sports equipment, vending machines.

In order to allow individual consumers to use their original suppliers of the equipment to dispose of the electronic equipment from 1st April 2007 all new electronic equipment have been specifically marked so that the user can identify the producer or the supplier. In addition, the government has funded the upgrade and extension of local dump facilities to allow individual consumers to dispose of the electronic equipment themselves.

Inevitably the real burden will rest on the producers and suppliers who will by law, have to set up and manage their own free of charge in-store collection of electronic equipment.