



CROWBERRY CONSULTING
Environment, Ethics and Corporate Responsibility Management

Air Pollution FAQs



Image from GREEBberg BLAWg.

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Why Do We Need To Regulate Air Quality?

Polluted air can cause problems for people who have lung diseases, heart conditions and asthma. Some pollutants are known to cause cancer. Children and older people are particularly at risk.

Air pollution also affects plants and wildlife, which is why it can be more difficult for plants to thrive in city centres. Sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides can make water and soil more acidic (and therefore harmful to some plants and animals). This can also reduce the amount of plants that provide food and shelter, causing serious problems for other wildlife.

In January 2016, air pollution levels in London had already breached annual pollution limits just one week into the year 2016. Under EU rules, sites are only allowed to breach these limits 18 times per year, but Putney High Street breached these limits for the 19th time in just over a week.

How Can I As An Individual Help To Improve Air Quality?

You could:

- Use less energy at home, then less coal, oil and gas will be burnt, thus reducing air pollution.
- Using public transport, cycling or walking wherever possible will reduce traffic pollution and fumes.
- If you have to use your car - make sure to have the right tyre pressure. If the pressure is down by 0.5 bars, the car needs 5 % more fuel and gives off more pollution.
 - Driving with the air conditioner turned on increases fuel consumption by 30 % whereas driving with windows open only increases it by 5 %.
 - Using a roof rack on your car can increase fuel consumption by 20 to 30 %.
 - Bicycles are better attached to the back of the car.
- When buying paints, varnishes or glues, look for products that are water-based or have low solvent content.

Individuals and businesses can all play a role in improving air quality. The transport industry can play a key role in improving air quality by adopting higher vehicle standards and fitting older vehicles with technology that helps mitigate pollution (retrofitting), complying with Low Emission Zones and through fuel efficient driving.

What Happens When I Don't Comply With The European Legislation?

Member States may be subject to fines for heavily polluted areas; however, as has been seen in London recently, the use of suppressants and an extension to compliance deadlines mitigates any polluting activity.

The [Ambient Air Quality Directive](#) sets an annual limit of 35 days, but in north-west London, concentrations of coarse particulate exceeded 50 micrograms per cubic metre (see the WHO air quality guidelines) for the 36th day in 2012. The suppressants used (typically calcium magnesium acetate solution) sticks particulates to the ground. However, London (and the UK) may be subject to fines if the above data is proved correct. It remains to be seen how much these fines will amount to.

The total number of air pollution incidents brought to the attention of, and investigated by the UK Environment Agency was 688 in 2013 and 614 in 2014, a decrease of about 11%. £1.4 million was confiscated from 25 defendants in 2014 for the failure to comply with the legislation.

How Can Crowberry Consulting Help You?

- As part of an EMS such as ISO14001 provide internal environmental auditing functions.
- Review your legal registers to ensure all relevant legal and other requirements are listed.
- Provide an Initial Environmental Review.
- Provide advice on low carbon technologies to reduce emissions and costs.

**Compiled by Ellie Digby – Legal Executive.
July 2018.**