

Warning to Small Businesses Over New Food Waste Regulations

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Firms face fines for not separating food waste, lawyer warns

Employers could face fines if they fail to separate their food waste from other recyclables and rubbish, an environmental lawyer has warned.

New legislation that requires businesses with as few as ten employees to follow strict waste rules has flown under the radar, according to Craig Burman, of commercial law firm Schofield Sweeney, who has been contacted by a number of companies, unclear about what the regulations mean for them and the consequences of failing to comply.

Under the Government's new 'Simpler Recycling' regulations, which came into force in March this year, employers with ten employees or more must separate all food waste - from excess canteen fare to teabags and packed lunch leftovers – from other recyclables and rubbish, before it is collected.

Mr Burman, who heads the Environmental and Regulatory team for Schofield Sweeney, said: "The regulations are designed to reduce waste and make recycling easier and more consistent across England, which is obviously a good thing.

"But unfortunately lots of businesses haven't heard about the new rules and for many 'Simpler Recycling' is proving to be far from simple.

"Implications such as how to keep food waste separate in a busy workplace environment are of serious concern, and firms are worried that their employees' tea club or 'meal deal' leftovers could land them in trouble."

He is urging companies of all sizes to make sure management and staff are aware of their responsibilities under the new legislation.

Under the Simpler Recycling regulations:

- Card and paper must be separated from glass, plastic and metal for recycling - to recycle them all together, businesses must prepare a written assessment to explain why they cannot be separated.
- All food waste must be disposed of separately
- Packaging, cans or bottles should contain no remnants of food or drink
- General unrecyclable waste, such as used paper towels, must also be put in separate bins

Craig Burman added: "The legislation applies to every employer with a workforce of ten-plus and includes landlords and facilities management companies, schools, and community organisations, such as churches and charities.

"Companies which employ fewer than ten full-time employees will also have to comply with the legislation from March 31st, 2027.

"Nobody wants to fall foul of the regulations and risk being faced with an Environment Agency compliance notice or, ultimately, a fine, so I'd advise them to take note of the regulations and if in doubt seek additional guidance."

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Schofield Sweeney is an award-winning full-service commercial law firm which is recognised as a Times Best Law Firm and one of the Sunday Times Best Places to Work in 2025.

Headquartered in Bradford and with offices in Leeds and Huddersfield, Yorkshire, its 175-strong team of

legal professionals excel in areas such as planning, environmental law, and contentious probate. It has one of the largest and most experienced real estate teams in the region and offers nationally renowned niche specialties in Islamic finance and energy projects.

Schofield Sweeney offers the full spectrum of legal advice, including asset protection, business growth, and legacy planning diverse to a diverse clientele ranging from exciting start-ups through to long-established family-run businesses, alongside international brands and household names.

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