

Don't miss the deadline!

New rules on water use and abstraction – do you now need an abstraction licence?

Water abstraction rules have changed and most previously exempt activities cannot continue without an abstraction licence in place. The following forms of abstraction now require a licence:

- All forms of irrigation including trickle irrigation - even if you already have a spray irrigation licence;
- Abstractions from groundwater boreholes within the previously exempt area;
- Transferring water by a navigation, harbour or conservancy authority;
- Abstracting water into and between internal drainage districts;
- Dewatering mines, quarries and engineering works;
- Warming (abstraction of water containing silt for deposit onto agricultural land);
- Abstractions for managed wetland systems, water level management plans and Countryside Stewardship agreements with flooding/wetland options;
- The majority of abstractions covered by Crown, visiting forces and the MOD.

These water abstraction rules will better protect the environment by helping to balance the needs of abstractors while protecting scarce water supplies and the plants and animals that rely on them.

So what do people need to do?

If you are a householder, farmer or business taking water from a river, stream or ground (borehole), you firstly need to check if you abstract more than 20m³ per day (or 4400 gallons per day). As a rough guide this is a similar amount to a medium sized milk tanker or equates to 260 baths a day. So, a single household is not likely to need a licence, unless it is part of a collection of houses on one borehole supply which may exceed 20m³ per day.

If you abstract less than 20m³ per day you do not need to apply for a licence.

The Environment Agency have a simple table that people can use to calculate their total water abstraction, based on highest possible daily usage. This table is below:

Use	Maximum number at any one time	Amount of water needed (in cubic metres)	Total volume per day (in cubic metres)	Number of days a year water is needed (if less than 365)	Total volume per year (in cubic metres)
People		0.2 m ³ per person (45 gallons per day)	m ³		m ³
Dairy cows, when water is used for cooling milk		0.13 m ³ per cow (30 gallons per day)	m ³		m ³
Dairy cows, when refrigerated bulk cooling is used		0.06 m ³ per cow (15 gallons per day)	m ³		m ³
Other cattle		0.04 m ³ per cow (10 gallons per day)	m ³		m ³
Horses		0.04 m ³ per horse (10 gallons per day)	m ³		m ³
Pigs		0.01 m ³ per pig (3 gallons per day)	m ³		m ³
Sheep		0.006 m ³ per sheep (0.2 gallons per day)	m ³		m ³
Poultry		0.0002 m ³ per bird (0.05 gallons per day)	m ³		m ³
Crop spraying for weed, pest, disease control		0.13 m ³ per acre (30 gallons per day)	m ³		m ³
Other uses	-	-	m ³		m ³
Total			m ³		m ³

If you abstract more than 20m³ per day – what now?

If you do abstract more than 20m³ (4400 gallons) you will need to apply for a licence. You can get an application form and further information on how to apply from the Environment Agency at:

<https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/environment-and-business/removing-previously-exempt-abstraction-activities/>

The Environment Agency also has a **free hotline** and bookable appointment service to help with drafting applications or answering any questions you may have. Call 03708 506 506 and ask for the 'New Authorisations hotline' or email enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk stating 'New Authorisations' in the email subject to find out more.

When do you need to apply by?

The deadline for applications is 31 December 2019. However, the Environment Agency strongly recommends that people submit their applications **before the end of September 2019**. By applying early this allows time for the Environment Agency to check they have all of the information they need for each application - known as making the application valid. It can take up to 3 months to validate an application.

It is your responsibility to apply for a licence if and when you need one. The Environment Agency may take enforcement action against you if they do not have a 'valid' application from you by 31 December 2019. If you continue to abstract after this deadline without submitting an application, your abstraction will be unlawful. It is therefore important for you not to miss the deadline.

customer service line
03708 506 506

incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
03459 88 11 88