



# Guide one

# Applying for trade effluent consent

Scotland and England

## **Guide one | Applying for trade effluent consent**

Understanding trade effluent: what it is, how consents work and how to apply.

## **Guide two | Understanding trade effluent charges**

Find out how trade effluent charges are calculated and how they're reflected in your bill.

*You are in guide one >*

Please go to [business-stream.co.uk/trade-effluent](https://business-stream.co.uk/trade-effluent) to view guide two.



# Introduction to trade effluent

**This guide will help you understand what trade effluent is, why you need a trade effluent consent and how to apply for one.**

Whether you have a multi-national food and drink company or a local car wash, trade effluent is an important consideration for your business.

If your site is discharging anything other than waste water, a trade effluent consent may be required and should be discussed with us - your water retailer. A trade effluent consent is a legal document so if this is required, any consent limits provided must be followed. Breaches of the consent can result in fines, reputational damage and ultimately the removal of the consent by your regional water wholesaler.

Trade effluent consents can appear confusing and complex but our dedicated team are here to support you. We've developed this handy guide to help you to understand how and why trade effluent is regulated and, if you need a consent, we've included some practical tips to help your business get your application right first time.

In this guide, you will find answers to the following questions:

1. **What is trade effluent?**
2. **Who controls trade effluent consents?**
3. **What is a trade effluent consent and how does it work?**
4. **What could happen if I breach my consent?**
5. **Applying for a consent and changes to, or termination of, an existing consent**

## Let's go!

# 1. What is trade effluent?

## Let's get to grips with trade effluent – what is it?

Trade effluent can be described as any liquid waste, which is wholly or in part produced in the course of any trade or industry, that is discharged to the public sewer. In simple terms, trade effluent is any liquid waste, other than surface water and domestic sewage, that's discharged from a premises being used for a business, trade or industry.

It covers both large and small premises' and includes:

- Food and drink production
- Chemical manufacturing
- Engineering
- Laundries
- Vehicle washes
- Photographic processing
- Leather and textile manufacturing

For more information, please view the **Sewerage (Scotland) Act 1968** (for premises in Scotland) and the **Water Industry Act 1991** (for premises in England) which provide legal definitions for trade effluent.

## What is the difference between waste water, surface water and trade effluent?

› **Surface water** is another word for rainwater that falls on the ground, on roofs and roads, pavements and paths and flows down the drain.

› **Waste water** is domestic sewage that is carried away, in sewers or drains, for treatment into a form that is suitable for discharge to the environment. Waste water covers the discharge from toilets, sinks, baths, showers and canteens that a business may use on site.

› **Trade effluent** is any liquid waste, other than surface water and domestic sewage, that is discharged from premises being used for a business, trade or industry. It covers any liquid waste which is discharged from production processes. It can include wash water from vehicles, machinery and floors, cooling waters and even surface water runoff that has been contaminated, for example - with oil.

To find out more about trade effluent charges, you can view our Understanding Trade Effluent Charges Guide (guide two) at [business-stream.co.uk/trade-effluent](https://business-stream.co.uk/trade-effluent).

## 2. Who controls trade effluent consents?

### Understanding who regulates and controls trade effluent disposal in Scotland and England, and why it's so important.

Each **water wholesaler in Scotland and England** is responsible for discharges of trade effluent within their region. This is controlled by licences issued to businesses and organisations that discharge trade effluent. These licenses are known as **trade effluent consents** and Letters of Authorisation (LOA), and are covered in Scotland by The Sewerage (Scotland) Act of 1968 and in England by The Water Industry Act 1991.

It is important that you apply for a licence, also known as a **trade effluent consent**, if you are discharging trade effluent.

- Discharge without a licence is illegal and can result in very large fines being levied against offenders.
- It's your responsibility to ensure that you have a licence if required. **Find out how to apply on page nine of this guide.**
- Once your wholesaler has reviewed your application and accepted, you'll be issued with a trade effluent 'consent' that lists the level of discharge of different chemicals and deposits that you are allowed to discharge. This consent is specific to you and your business.

### What is consent failure?

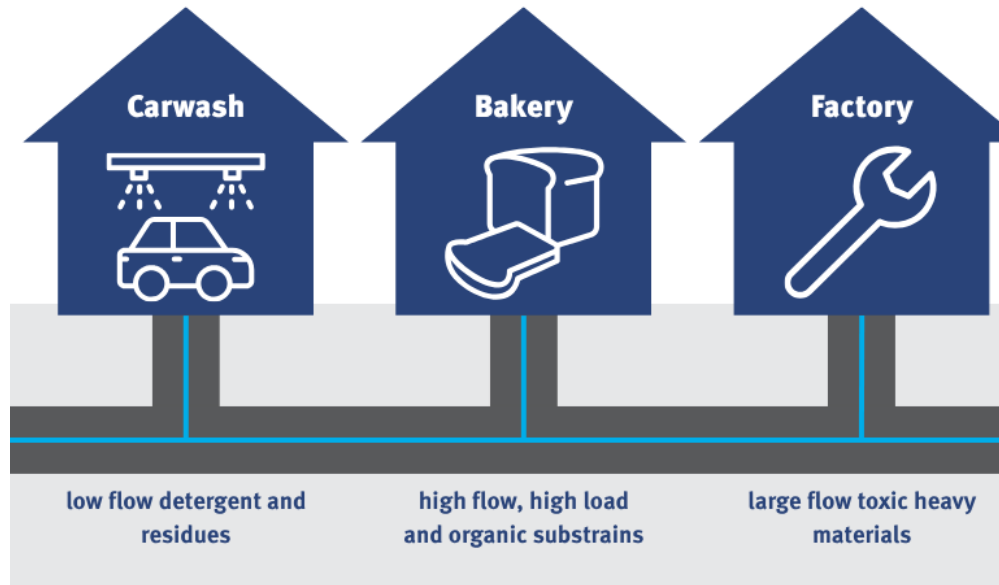
Each business or organisation that is discharging trade effluent, will have a **specific consent that matches the materials and chemicals** that are used in their production. The consent will confirm levels of TE discharge that are not allowed to be exceeded.

Please note, **your regional water wholesaler will occasionally sample the trade effluent you are discharging** to ensure that limitations are being controlled by you. If you breach these limits, you'll be advised and set objectives to return the discharge to acceptable levels. Constant breaches may result in fines or court action.

For example, the effluent from a car wash will usually be a low volume and will contain detergents and residues from the washing of cars. This is very different to effluent produced in a factory setting where flows can be considerably larger and can contain persistent and potentially toxic substances such as heavy metals.

The reason for the legislation and regulation is to **protect the environment** and **ensure that land and rivers are not polluted**.

Another example would be trade effluent from a bakery, which will be different as the effluent is likely to contain a significant load of organic substances like flour and fat.



Due to the varying volumes and strengths of trade effluent, it's **important to ensure that all infrastructures such as sewers, treatment works and watercourses can cope with, and manage, the discharge**. That's why wholesalers need to carefully assess and regulate all discharges of trade effluent made into their sewerage systems.

It's also important to remember, that we all play a part in ensuring that our sewerage systems are kept in good working order. By doing this, you'll stay within your **Legal Consent Parameters** (see page seven) to discharge. This can result in more accurate sampling and reduces the chance of being warned or fined for breaching any consent limits - including termination of consent for not following compliance.

## Did you know?

There are approximately 300,000 sewer blockages\* that occur every year across the UK, creating a huge impact on businesses due to the clean-up costs, flooding and disruption. This also causes pollution in your local area.

Around 83.1% of drain blockages are caused due to inappropriate materials being discharged down drains\*. Around half of this is to fat, oil and greases being poured down sinks.

\*Survey completed by National Association of Drainage Contractors (NADC).



# 3. What is a trade effluent consent and how does it work?

## Understanding what a consent (to dispose trade effluent) is and how it works.

Any business, large or small, with a significant trade effluent discharge must obtain a licence, also known as a trade effluent (TE) consent, from their regional wholesaler to discharge it into the public sewer.

A TE consent is a legal document that sets limits on the volume, strength and characteristics of your effluent discharge to the sewer. It's then your legal responsibility to keep it under control and manage your effluent within these set limits.

## How it works

TE consents can vary from business to business, and will be dependent on a number of factors, such as discharge location to sewer, volume and processes which result in the trade effluent discharge.

It will contain limits for:

- **The maximum volume and flow rate of your discharge**  
TE consent controls the volume of your effluent as well as the rate at which it can be discharged to the public sewer i.e. how much effluent is leaving your business and how quickly.
- **The temperature, pH and other chemical parameters of the discharge**  
TE consent controls the strength and characteristics of your discharged effluent. This includes numeric limits for the temperature, pH and other chemical parameters.

Go to **page seven** of this guide to find out more about **trade effluent parameters** and why wholesalers need to monitor them.

# Trade effluent parameters

<b>Volume and flow</b>	Volume and flow rate are controlled to prevent flooding and to make sure that the sewers and waste water treatment works are not overloaded.
<b>pH</b>	pH, which is a measure of acidity or alkalinity, is controlled to ensure that sewers, pumping stations and water recycling centres, including their processes are protected.
<b>Temperature</b>	Temperature is controlled in order to protect any staff working in the sewers and to ensure that bad odours are prevented or at least minimised.
<b>Chemical oxygen demand (COD) and biological oxygen demand (BOD)</b>	Chemical oxygen demand (COD) is a measure of the capacity of your effluent to consume oxygen during the decomposition of organic matter and the oxidation of inorganic chemicals. Biological oxygen demand (BOD) is controlled to ensure that there's no detrimental impact on all biological waste water treatment works processes.
<b>Suspended solids</b>	Suspended solids are a measure of the particles in your trade effluent. These suspended solids are controlled to ensure that there are no blockages in the sewers due to too much settlement.
<b>Sulphate</b>	Sulphate is controlled to prevent the corrosion of concrete sewers and the production of bad odors.
<b>Solvents</b>	Most organic solvents are flammable or highly flammable, depending on their volatility. They can produce flammable or explosive atmospheres and are restricted to controlled or safe levels.
<b>Toxic metals</b>	Toxic metals such as antimony, beryllium, chromium, copper, lead, nickel, selenium, silver, tin, vanadium and zinc can cause a range of problems. The presence of metals can inhibit biological treatment processes in the waste water treatment works and they may accumulate in and damage the environment.
<b>Fat, oil and grease</b>	Fat, oil and grease, also known as FOG, is controlled to prevent blockages in the sewer and pumping stations and to protect all waste water treatment works.
<b>Ammonia</b>	Ammonia can cause unsafe sewer atmospheres and toxicity problems in watercourses as it's highly toxic to aquatic animals. It's very dangerous to the environment.
<b>Methane</b>	Methane can cause unsafe sewer atmospheres, leading to hazardous working conditions.
<b>Hydrogen sulphide</b>	Hydrogen sulphide is a toxic gas that can build up in the sewer atmosphere, leading to hazardous working conditions. It smells terrible, which can also be a nuisance.
<b>Flammable substances</b>	Flammable substances or substances which can produce flammable or explosive atmospheres are restricted to controlled or safe levels.

Please note, this list isn't exhaustive. Wholesalers may include additional controls or exclude any persistent or harmful substance in your effluent discharge if they feel that it's necessary.



# 4. What could happen if I breach my consent?

## Understanding the penalty for failing to meet trade effluent consent limits.

### What is a consent failure?

Water wholesalers will regularly carry out site visits to take samples of trade effluent being discharged by businesses and organisations in their region. This is done to check that your trade effluent discharge is within set limits of your existing trade effluent consent and to evaluate the treatable strength of discharge at the time the sample is taken.

If one or more of the parameters of your effluent consent are above your consent limits, your regional water wholesaler will inform you of the breach of your consent and an action plan will be put in place to ensure your parameters return to being within your consent limits again.

### Important information

If you continue to breach your consent, your water wholesaler can take formal action against you which can include court action and/or the termination of your existing consent.

### We're here to help

Please note, if you have any questions and would like to speak to one of our friendly, trade effluent experts, please get in touch with us on **0344 902 0226** and we'll be happy to help. You can also visit our website at **[business-stream.co.uk/trade-effluent](https://business-stream.co.uk/trade-effluent)** for more support.



# 5. Applying for a consent and changes to, or termination of, an existing consent

## Step one

### › Complete a trade effluent consent application form

To get started, please go to our dedicated trade effluent page at **[business-stream.co.uk/trade-effluent](https://business-stream.co.uk/trade-effluent)** and complete the relevant application form for your site's location i.e. Scotland or England.

The application form can be used to:

- apply for a new full or temporary consent (temporary six months)
- review your existing consent (modification/variation)
- for a change of occupier, or
- to terminate your consent.

If you'd like support in completing your application form, please get in touch with one of our friendly advisers on **0344 902 0226** or email **[tradeeffluent@business-stream.co.uk](mailto:tradeeffluent@business-stream.co.uk)**.

## Step two

### › Submit your application form

Once you have completed your application, please email the full application to our Trade Effluent Team at **[tradeeffluent@business-stream.co.uk](mailto:tradeeffluent@business-stream.co.uk)**. Alternatively, you can post your application to us at:

**Business Stream FAO TE team**  
**PO Box 17381**  
**Edinburgh**  
**EH12 1GT**

## Step three

### › We'll process your application

Once we've received your application, our Trade Effluent team will review your form and your supporting documents. We'll then confirm with you, by email, that we've submitted your application to your regional water wholesaler. Our confirmation email will include information about trade effluent charges and a provisional completion date.

If your application is rejected at any stage, we'll contact you to confirm the reason for this and you'll have the opportunity to reapply.

If there is any further information or amendments required, we'll be in touch with you by email. Please make sure to check your inbox and junk mail for our response to your application. Additionally, your water wholesaler may get in touch with you directly during the assessment of your application to request further information and/or arrange a site visit.

#### **If your site is in Scotland**

- Your wholesalers assessment can take up to 90 calendar days from the date we send your application to them. Applications requesting changes to your existing consent can take a minimum of 90 calendar days to complete. Applications requesting a termination of consent will be effective from the date we send your application to your wholesaler.

#### **If your site is in England**

- Your wholesalers assessment can take up to 60 business days from the date we send your application to them. Applications requesting a termination of consent can take up to 10 business days to go into effect. Please note, different wholesalers have different rules when backdating. This means termination dates will be determined by them.

### › Completion

Once we have an outcome, following the review of your application, we'll be in touch via email to confirm this with you.

If your application is successful, your consent will come into effect and trade effluent charges will be applied to your account.

You can find out more about the charges by viewing **Guide two: Understanding trade effluent charges**. You can find this at [business-stream.co.uk/trade-effluent](https://business-stream.co.uk/trade-effluent).

## Step four

# We're here to help

If you have any questions and would like to speak to one of our friendly, trade effluent experts, please get in touch on **0330 123 2000** and we'll be happy to help. You can also visit our website at **[business-stream.co.uk/trade-effluent](https://business-stream.co.uk/trade-effluent)** to find out more.



# Six top tips to getting it right first time

**We've helped thousands of customers manage their trade effluent consents. And during that time, we've learned a thing or two. So, here's our top tips to getting it right first time.**

## **Tip 1 | Pick your effluent inspection point wisely**

Your water wholesaler will expect you to provide an inspection point or manhole on your premises, as part of your consent application, to enable them to sample your effluent discharge for control and charging purposes. Here's a quick guide to getting it right.

### **Don't pick an inspection point:**

- where this is a domestic discharge from toilets, sinks, handwash basins or showers
- where your wholesaler would have to enter a manhole chamber to obtain a sample or where they could be exposed to any hazard
- where there are any obstructions, temporary or permanent, or restrictions to entry. This includes obstruction caused by equipment, materials, deliveries or vehicles, or
- that is locked and can't easily be accessed.

### **As a reminder:**

- Any manhole covers must be easy to remove and lightweight.
- If the manhole cover is large and heavy, it should be split for easy access. Square manhole covers which are split into two triangles bolted together should be separated.
- Keyholes for lifting irons should be positioned to balance the centre of gravity for the manhole. If not, the manhole cover can jam on lifting.

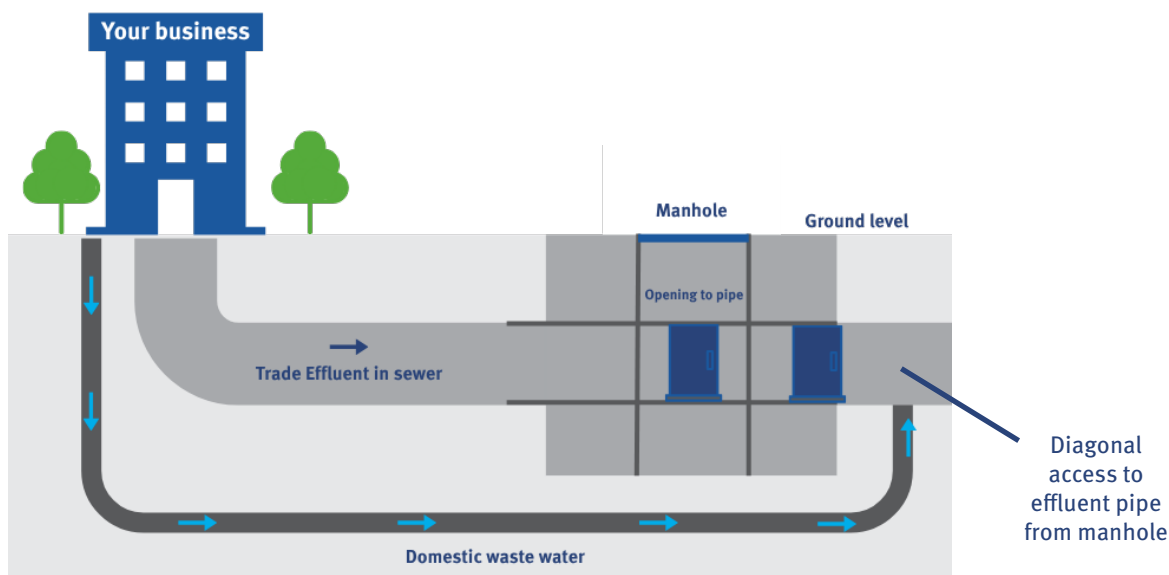




To keep you on the right track, here's an example of an inspection point which will pass the test:

### Designated manhole

The sewer should have an opening at ground level (usually a manhole) directly above the access point to the sewer pipe. The minimum dimensions of the opening are 102mm width by 350mm along the length of the pipe, unless otherwise agreed by your water wholesaler. Diagonal access won't be accepted i.e. your opening at ground level must be in line with the access point to the sewer so that the example in the figure below does not occur as this would make access difficult for any personnel.



If you don't have an opening at ground level to the sewer pipe, simply contact Business Stream and we'll be happy to help.

### Tip 2 | Pick your point of effluent discharge wisely

If you wish to change your effluent discharge point following your application, you can but you must obtain permission from your water wholesaler in advance. That's why it's important to pick wisely from the start to avoid any hassle or delay further down the line.

### Tip 3 | Include all processes which generate trade effluent on your application

Your water wholesaler will also limit your trade effluent consent to the process(es) which they have approved on your application. For example, if you apply for a consent to discharge trade effluent from a process of 'gully cleaning and vehicle washing' only but you also discharge effluent from 'washing laundry' which you did not include on your application, you will be in breach of your consent.



## Tip 4 | Keep an eye on your effluent volume and strength

Your water wholesaler can attend your site at any reasonable time to carry out an inspection of your consented effluent discharges, to check whether you're in line with your limits and to evaluate the average treatable strength. If their inspection shows that your consent is in breach, you could be fined.

From time to time, your water wholesaler may decide to change the details or requirements of entry to, and inspection of, your effluent. If this is the case, they will write to you outlining their new requirements, which you will be expected to comply with.

## Tip 5 | Keep any treatment works, sampling equipment and meters in good working order

Your water wholesaler expects you to provide, maintain and test any sampling equipment and effluent, or meters, that they have asked you to provide to ensure that they are in good working order - unless your meter has been adopted by your water wholesaler who will assume responsibility of this.

If it's found that your equipment is not working correctly, your water wholesaler has the right to make estimates of the volume, strength and composition of your effluent until it is back up and running to their satisfaction. This may affect the accuracy of your bill. If this happens, please call us and we'll be happy to talk you through the process. We can also liaise with your water wholesaler on your behalf to agree a solution.

## Tip 6 | Keep a record of your data

Please note that your water wholesaler expects you to keep an up-to-date record of any or all of the following details of your effluent for at least 24 months:

- Volume
- Flow rate
- Strength
- Composition
- Temperature of the effluent discharged

They can also request the above data for inspection at any time within this period, at any reasonable time. So, make sure that you measure and record the data above so that if requested, you can provide a copy to them.

## Need expert advice?

Get in touch with our team of trade effluent experts at  
[business-stream.co.uk/trade-effluent](https://business-stream.co.uk/trade-effluent)