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Guidance

Operator monitoring assessment: environmental permits

Published 20 March 2020

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Your environmental permit tells you what emissions to air and discharges to water you have to monitor. The Environment Agency checks you are doing it properly using an operator monitoring assessment (OMA).

We carry out OMAs on installations we regulate under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016.

Here we explain the process and how you can prepare for an OMA.

1. What happens in an OMA

We will carry out separate assessments of your monitoring of:

- emissions to air
- discharges to water

We will:

- talk to relevant site personnel
- look at appropriate documentation
- inspect your monitoring equipment and sampling facilities

We will record information and data about the quality and reliability of your monitoring.

2. How we use OMA results

We use the results of OMA to:

- assess the quality and reliability of your monitoring (including monitoring carried out for you by contractors)
- tell you about any improvements you must make
- help us decide if we need to do a more detailed audit of your monitoring procedures

3. Prepare for your OMA

Planning and preparing for your OMA will help make sure:

- we carry it out effectively and efficiently
- it accurately reflects your current monitoring situation

This is what you can do to prepare in advance.

3.1 Read our OMA guidance

We have produced guidance for our officers that explains how to carry out an OMA and the areas to assess. It covers the self-monitoring of emissions to air and discharges to water.

You can read this guidance before your OMA so you understand what will happen and how to prepare. You can get a copy of the guidance from your regulatory officer.

3.2 Carry out an internal audit

To help you prepare for your OMA, we recommend you use the OMA guidance to do your own audit. This will help you identify monitoring that needs improving. You may be able to complete these improvements before the OMA.

3.3 Make sure documents are available for review

Make the following documents available:

- the company organogram and details of roles and responsibilities related to monitoring
- a copy of your permit, monitoring returns and monitoring schedules
- recent emission monitoring reports, including those from external contractors
- management system reviews relevant to monitoring
- details of any accreditation, certification and type-approvals, for example, UKAS schedules (includes laboratories), MCERTS certificates, ISO9001, ISO14001
- copies of internal and external audits of monitoring
- any other records or documents requested

If you carry out unaccredited monitoring, you may also need to make some of the following documents available during the OMA:

- copies of the monitoring procedures and methods you use
- performance and validation data for the methods you use, for example, limits of detection, linearity, operating ranges – including for surrogate methods
- training and professional development records for staff involved in monitoring
- calibration and maintenance procedures, records and schedules
- monitoring equipment instruction manuals and performance data

4. Contact us

Contact the Environment Agency if you want more information about an OMA.

General enquiries

National Customer Contact Centre
PO Box 544
Rotherham
S60 1BY

Email enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

Telephone 03708 506 506

Telephone from outside the UK (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm GMT) +44 (0) 114 282 5312

Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.

Due to the current health emergency we have reduced the times our phone lines are open. This is under review and we hope to be able to extend them soon. If possible please contact us by email at enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk.

The impact of COVID-19 on our teams means you may experience some delays in responses as most of our staff will be working from home. We are currently unable to deal with post sent to our offices in the usual way.

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