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Landfill Directive

Ministers are threatening to jail and fine companies, which don't comply, with a new hazardous waste directive. From the beginning of July, The European Union's landfill directive will force businesses to describe exactly what their waste contains so that it can be handled in the right way. DEFRA environment Minister, Elliot Morley warned "businesses need to be aware that the penalties for failing to comply with the controls can be severe – in some cases, a heavy fine or even jail." Hazardous waste has properties or contains substances, which might make it harmful to human health or the environment. Because of their chemical contents, business items such as computer monitors, television and fluorescent tubes have joined the list of hazardous waste such as asbestos and industrial chemicals. For more information please see South East Business News.

Kyoto Protocol

Although the US President has refused to sign up to the Kyoto Protocol, it has recently been reported that New York, Los Angeles, Seattle and 140 other cities in US and Canada have signed up to the Kyoto Protocol. The mayors represent 32 million people and have pledged that their cities will meet the Kyoto target of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by seven per cent. The US produces about 25% of the world's greenhouse gases and is the planet's biggest polluter. One of George

Bush's first acts when taking office in 2001 was to pull out of the Kyoto agreement, claiming it would harm the US economy. More than 140 nations have signed up, including Britain. For more information please see Metro News.

Medical Records Security

According to a recent article the government has pledged personal medical records to be secure when a new database costing £6bn goes live in England next year. The database will allow doctors and nurses easy access to medical records from all over the country, potentially saving time, money and lives. Some critics have shown concern about breaches of patient confidentiality, but the government has insisted that those health professionals who really need to see the records will do so. And also patients who do not wish their records to be shared on this database will be able to stay off the new system, however they will be told that this may lead to a lower quality of care, if they ever get into an emergency situation. For more information please see BBC News.

Is the UV Index causing confusion?

According to a recent research it has been shown that many people find it confusing with the weather warnings designed to help reduce risk of skin cancer. A poll for the UK Cancer Research charity, found that more than 70% of people questioned did not understand the concept of UV Index. This is despite it regularly featuring on television weather forecasts.



Over exposure to sun can trigger skin cancer, which kills around 1700 people in the UK each year. The UV Index was developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a way to describe the maximum strength of the ultraviolet radiation from the sun. The index ranges from one (the lowest) to 20 (the highest). However, it is rare for the Index to go above 8 in the UK. The Index is a more accurate indication of the potential to sunburn than the temperature forecast each day. For more information please see BBC News.

Storing Carbon Dioxide

The UK government has recently announced that funding will be provided for capturing greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and storing them under the North Sea. This involves power stations and oil rigs holding on to their emissions of gases such as carbon dioxide and methane which are then pumped underground to keep them out of the atmosphere. The North Sea is thought to be ideal to store the gases, as they would simply reoccupy the spaces in deep geographical formations that had previously trapped oil reserves for millions of years. For example, Norway's Statoil Company, has buried carbon dioxide under the North Sea since 1996. In 2002, about 35% of UK carbon dioxide emissions were from the energy industries. Therefore, applying carbon dioxide capture to these power stations would greatly reduce current greenhouse emissions. However there are many outstanding technical issues which need to be resolved before carbon dioxide and storage is widely used. All capture technologies consume energy and reduce efficiency of a plant. The industry needs to be convinced that the costs are affordable. For more information please see BBC News.

IT for Girls

The education department has recently launched a new scheme aimed at getting more girls interested in IT careers.

Computer Club for Girls (CC4G) hopes to persuade girls to take up IT jobs and show them that it is not just for boys. Some 3500 girls have been involved in the pilot CC4G scheme set up by the government-backed industry body, e-skills UK. Head of Agency, Pam Alexander said; "By targeting girls at a significant stage in their education we can attract them into IT at the right time by showing them that computers can be both fun and useful. Our next challenge - after rolling this out nationwide - is to build the pathway from 14-years onwards and then address the needs of boys too." The South East England Development Agency, which is funding the scheme, hopes that 150,000 girls aged 10 to 14 years will be given a new insight into the possibilities of IT careers. Firms such as IBM, EDS and British Airways have pledged to support the initiative. For more information please see BBC News.

Royal Mail's E-Learning Initiative

Royal Mail has started an e-learning initiative designed to improve the computer literacy of its staff by issuing 6000 home PC's. The Internet ready PCs which would be supplied by Futuremedia, would allow staff to hire them for £4.40 per week. Enterprise IT director at Royal Mail, Wendy Powney, said: "In the next few years IT will need to play a more pivotal role in front-line communications and HR self-service, and we hope employees will be able to enter expenses, change payment details and book time off using intranet functions." Royal mail is also investigating the feasibility of voice over IP telephony. Their IT department manages 75,000 phones across the organisation. For more information please visit www.computing.co.uk

New Generation Concorde

A recent agreement between Japan and France to build a successor to the retired supersonic jet aircraft Concorde was signed at the Paris Air Show. Japan and France will split the investment of \$1.84m a year research over the next three years.



The new plane will have 300 passenger seats and will cut the flight time between New York and Tokyo to six hours. Japan's Trade Minister Shoichi Nakagawa said: "Japan has successfully tested an engine that could theoretically reach speeds up to five times the speed of sound." Concorde flew at mach 2 – twice the speed of sound. It never recouped the large amounts invested in it by the time it was taken out of service, in 2003, after 34 years. The deal is also significant in breaking the Japanese habit of working with US organisations in the industry. For further information please see BBC News.

Satellite Tracking

According to Transport Secretary, Alistair Darling, satellite tracking or pay as you go road charging could be put to test within five years. The pilot scheme could cover a large region and if successful a nationwide scheme could be put in place by 2015. The charges will vary from 2p a mile on rural roads to £1.30 a mile in congested roads. The charges are to replace the road tax and fuel duty. Transport Secretary also added: "Road pricing is not an easy option – there will be hard choices and difficulties along the way. But we need to face up to all this now." Motorist groups have reacted very angrily to this proposal and a Mori survey suggests 16 % of drivers would refuse to have tracking devices fitted onto their cars. The survey also suggested 34% would oppose the introduction of charges for driving on congested roads at peak times, compared to 47% who supported the measure. The real issue would be the public acceptance of this proposal. For more information please see BBC News.

RFID

Tesco, the giant food retailer, started a full-scale rollout of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) for tracking pallets of goods through its supply chain - from distribution to each store - at the beginning of this year. It has commented that RFID suppliers and standards bodies need to address logistical issues exposed by its

trials of the technology and the immature European standards and a lack of packaged products have presented challenges in pilots of the technology - which it calls radio barcode - to track stock and respond to customer trends. Simon Palinkas, Tesco's radio barcode programme manager said: "The biggest headache today is tag quality; it is nowhere near a 100 per cent read rate, which is where it needs to be, and radio frequency characteristics are hugely affected by environmental factors." He also added: "EU RFID regulations are extremely tough, and that the European radio frequency standard EN302 208, which is undergoing ratification, falls well short of its US equivalent."

DHL, the transportation and logistics arm of Deutsche Post World Net, began testing RFID in 1998. It has recently started developing a global IT infrastructure to let it use RFID tags for tracking more than a billion packages a year by 2015. DHL wants to achieve tighter control of shipments, cut costs, and improve operating performance by reducing paperwork and data collection.

For further information please visit www.computing.co.uk