

Waste management facility operators need to be aware of the approaching deadline for Continuing Competence under the CIWM/WAMITAB Operator Competence scheme for England and Wales.

This scheme is one of the two routes approved by Defra through which operators can demonstrate their technical competence and it includes a requirement for individuals to keep their competence up to date. At present, the Continuing Competence aspect of the scheme applies to existing holders of a Certificate of Technical Competence (CoTC) and those individuals who have previously been 'deemed competent'. In the future, it will also apply to all those who gain a competence qualification.

Following discussions with Defra, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Environment Agency, the deadline for taking the Continuing Competence test was extended to 29 February 2012. To avail themselves of this extension, candidates had to register their interest with WAMITAB before the end of February 2011.

"The extension was agreed as part of a pragmatic approach adopted to deal with new sectors to ensure no one was disadvantaged," explains Lawrence Strong, WAMITAB Director General. "In addition to the 1,200 operators who have already taken the test, a further 1,300 people have registered their interest with WAMITAB and will have to book and take the test before the deadline.

"However, since WAMITAB has issued over 11,500 CoTCs, this still leaves a significant number that will need to take the test. It is important that people book in good time to avoid a rush as the deadline approaches and the possibility of being non-compliant. We have increased the number of test centres and places available for the test."

Andy Bee, Environment & Business Adviser from the Environment Agency, added:

"In this fast changing sector, it is important that operators are able to demonstrate that they are keeping their knowledge up to date and continue to be well qualified to operate in compliance with their permit. Both the WAMITAB/CIWM and ESA/EUSkills competence schemes are good

examples of a third party accreditation approach to regulation and are fully supported by us.

“We are concerned at the low level of take up of the continuing competence test. We have already written to all operators to explain the requirements including the extended deadline for the test. Our officers are continuing to re-enforce that message during regular site visits and contact with operators. We are taking steps to actively monitor uptake by operators and will consider appropriate enforcement action against those who are unwilling to comply with the requirements