It’s no secret that construction is one of the most significant producers of waste of any industry. According to Wrap, the construction industry accounts for 60% of all materials used, creates 33% of waste and generates 45% of all CO2 emissions in the UK.

With such a huge capacity to produce waste, which could be damaging or harmful to the environment, there should be strict regulations set in place to ensure the correct protocol is followed and the risks are reduced. In 2008, legislation was passed to enforce the proper management of waste was followed on English construction sites. Site Waste Management Plans (SWMP) were compulsory to all construction projects costing over £30,000. The SWMP records the volume of waste created on a construction site and documents how it will be disposed of, recycled or reused.

However, despite the industry’s increased focus on the management of construction waste,legislation has been introduced that means it’s no longer compulsory for sites to produce site waste management plans for every project. While these reforms are well-intentioned - the government wants to reduce red tape - there are concerns that all of the positive changes that SWMP rules have had on the building industry thus far could be undone.

The impact of SWMP regulations

In theirrelatively short life span, SWMP regulations have significantly influenced the way that the construction industry thinks about waste, in particular encouraging companies to show greater consideration for reusing and recycling materials.

As part of the Government's 2008 Climate Change Act, the UK has vowed to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050 (against base levels set in 1990). Recycling materials has become essential for the construction industry if the UK is to stay on track and meet its efficiency target. It seems that the industry is taking its green badge seriously, as it is already exceeding its 70% target for recovering construction and demolition (C&D) waste.

It seems that SWMP have become common practice for many construction sites. It enables them to make more conscientious choices regarding the materials used. This kills two birds with one stone, as it not only helps to care for the environment but also looks after their bottom line through improved cost savings from waste management.

Hazardous waste

From batteries to chemicals and old equipment, most construction sites will have to deal with disposing of challenging items at times. While construction sites usually generate much more non-hazardous waste than hazardous, having a proper disposal measure in place for both types is essential to avoid fines and any potential damage to the environment.

A common issue that affects construction sites is categorising what constitutes hazardous waste, as it is a legal requirement that the two types must be separated. In most cases, the waste code on the product will inform you if it is hazardous or not - it will have an asterisk beside it if it is hazardous - or it will be clearly labelled with black and orange colours and danger symbols.

If you are going to be producing 500 kilograms of hazardous waste during a 12-month period then you must register your premises with the government to avoid falling into any legal troubles. Many sites outsource their waste collection to registered companies. This simplifies the process and ensures that the waste is disposed of in the most environmentally-responsible way. Specialist waste disposal companies will provide you with all the legal documentation required, including a waste audit and a consignment note, so you can guarantee that you are getting an expert service without the hassle.

Designing for the future

To stay on track to hitting the government's targets, there will be greater emphasis placed on waste reduction during the design stage of the construction process. This is where there is the greatest room for environmental improvements.

Designing for deconstruction is a growing school of thought in the construction industry. Moving away from the cartoon-esque dynamite demolition of buildings, designing for deconstruction encourages more eco-friendly demolition plans. This includes a greater consideration when choosing the materials used and how companies plan to recycle them. This way, architects can deliberate which materials will create the largest amount of waste and eliminate them from the building work, in favour of more environmentally-friendly replacements.

Over the last decade, there have been significant improvements and investments in the types of materials that can be recycled and reused. While this broadens the quality of the environmentally-friendly structures built, there is still an issue in making specialist recycling services available nationwide.

For more from this company visit their website www.direct365.co.uk