

Environment Agency 2025 Waste Exemptions: Update for arboricultural contractors

January 2026



In April 2025 the Environment Agency (EA) introduced new annual charges for waste disposal. As with many such regulatory changes it was uncertain how this would affect arboricultural contractors. After discussions with the EA, the Arboricultural Association can confirm that in most cases arboricultural contractors will not be impacted by the changes.

Within the new regulations there is a series of exemptions which contractors must pay to access. At first glance, the exemption likely to affect arboricultural contractors is T6 – treating waste wood by chipping. To purchase a T6 exemption, contractors would need to pay £420 for the first exemption, and £76 for each subsequent exemption.

Some activities which involve chipping, shredding, pulverising or cutting wood do not need a T6 exemption. One of those activities is defined by the EA as treating virgin wood – **“trees and branches resulting from forestry work or management of land, gardens and parks. Virgin wood is not classed as waste.”**

The absence of a specific mention of arboriculture in this definition is unfortunate, but we have confirmed that the position of the EA is that arboricultural activities are included within the reference to **“management of land, gardens and parks”**, and that ‘land’ includes sites such as highways or railways. Arboricultural contractors therefore do not need to purchase a T6 exemption.

Arboricultural contractors should note that if they are only transporting virgin wood (previously referred to as ‘green waste’) and directing that material to specific end uses themselves, then they will not need to register as a Waste Carrier. If they are transporting virgin wood to a green waste recycling facility, such as a commercial composting site, then it is regarded as green waste in transfer and the contractor will require a Lower Tier Waste Carrier registration. Contractors are advised to check the regulations to ensure compliance.

For more information, please refer to the government guidance here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/waste-exemption-t6-treating-waste-wood-and-waste-plant-matter-by-chipping-shredding-cutting-or-pulverising>

The next edition of the Association’s Approved Contractor Scheme Standards will be updated to reflect this situation.