

The benefits of good practice

Flat Glass Collection



In January 2009 the Waste Protocols Project, a joint WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme) and Environment Agency initiative, launched a Flat Glass Quality Protocol to raise the quality and quantity of flat glass cullet available for use in manufacturing – particularly the production of new flat glass.



A Good Practice Guide specifically aimed at collectors of waste flat glass has been produced in support of the new Protocol. In this leaflet, WRAP and the Environment Agency explain the reasons behind the introduction of the Good Practice Guide – and outline some of the significant benefits on offer to companies that follow its guidelines.

Who is the Good Practice Guide aimed at?

Companies that collect waste flat glass as their business, or as a result of their business, who want to reduce their costs or obtain a better price for the glass they collect. Collectors can include window manufacturers and installers, windscreen fitters, scrap vehicle merchants and demolition and construction companies.

What does the Good Practice Guide do?

Collectors of waste flat glass have a key role to play in increasing the quantity of recovered material that can be turned back into flat glass. The Good Practice Guide has been written to give collectors the information they need to help them fulfil this role – and to help them realise a range of important financial and environmental benefits.

The guide contains information on common contaminants of waste flat glass, and gives tips and advice on the best practices and procedures to adopt to reduce contamination and improve quality. This not only covers the collection of the glass itself, but also its transport, handling and storage.

Why is it needed?

It is estimated the UK generates between 670,000-770,000 tonnes of waste flat glass every year. Around 210,000 tonnes of this material is currently recycled - but the rest, around 500,000 tonnes, goes to landfill. The reason why more is not used is down to quality. Much of the flat glass recovered is too contaminated to be used in manufacturing processes.





By ensuring the waste flat glass they recover is properly sorted, and stored in such a way as to reduce contamination, collectors are much less likely to have the material they supply to processors rejected. This means they will avoid expensive disposal costs. If they are selling on the glass they have collected, better quality glass means better prices.

The Flat Glass Quality Protocol and its supporting documents will drive an improvement in the quality of flat glass throughout the supply chain. From collectors of waste glass at the bottom, to flat glass manufacturers at the top, in England and Wales.

Because collectors are at the very start of the supply chain, any measures they take to improve quality have a positive knock-on effect at later stages. By improving the quality of recovered flat glass they send to processors, collectors make it much easier for the glass to be refined into good quality processed cullet.

Why do manufacturers want to use more cullet made from waste flat glass?

Re-melting cullet uses 25% less energy than making glass from raw materials, which can result in significant savings. Each tonne of cullet also saves 1.2 tonnes of raw materials from being extracted. Even when taking collection, transport and processing costs into account, cullet can often be purchased more cheaply than the corresponding virgin raw materials.

Why should I follow the Good Practice Guide?

By following the guide collectors can realise a host of benefits – both financial and environmental.

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Collectors that follow the guide will also be able to publicly acknowledge the fact their company takes environmental issues seriously.

Do I have to follow the Good Practice Guide?

The guide is completely voluntary so there is no obligation to follow it. However, if collectors can show processors they have followed the guide they will be in a strong position to convince them that the glass they have collected is good quality and free from contamination.

By not following the guide collectors will not be able to provide processors with this evidence. Because of the risks associated with using contaminated cullet in production, processors are more likely to reject material lacking any quality assurance.

Where can I get a copy of the Good Practice Guide?

You can download a copy of the guide, and access a range of practical guidance and support, by visiting the Environment Agency website at www.environment-agency.gov.uk or the WRAP website at www.wrap.org.uk

“It is important for glass manufacturers to keep their costs down in the current economic climate, and one of the best ways to do this is by buying and using high quality cullet rather than raw materials. If more flat glass of sufficient quality could be supplied to manufacturers it would certainly be used.”

Ian Chisholm, Glass and Glazing Federation (GGF), member of the Flat Glass Quality Protocol Technical Advisory Group.

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