

Raising Standards

A new scheme to demonstrate technical competence has been approved. CIWM's education and training manager, **Claire Poole**, explains

If you operate a waste management/resource facility permitted under the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2007 and are subject to proving your "fit and proper person" status, you will have had to ensure a technically competent person is on site an appropriate amount of time – this would have been demonstrated in one of three ways:

- as a certificate of technical competence (CoTC) holder
- an individual "deemed competent" for a specific site
- an individual assessed by the Environment Agency (for a facility not listed as needing a CoTC).

As of 22 December last year a new scheme for demonstrating competence was approved for England and Wales by Defra and the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG). This scheme is managed jointly by CIWM and WAMITAB and replaces the original CoTC scheme that had been in place since 1994.

What about Scotland and Northern Ireland?

If you are operating a facility in Scotland or Northern Ireland the changes do not apply to you.

What if I am already "technically competent"?

If you are already considered to be a technically competent person under the old scheme then you do not need to gain any new award, but you must now demonstrate your continuing competence every two years. The first two-year period starts on 1 March 2009. You should ensure that you pass a continuing competence test before 28 February 2011. Any existing

Operator Competence VRQ Underway

TWO EMPLOYEES from the Norfolk County Council waste operations team have become the first in the UK to be awarded the VRQ certificate in Wastes and Resource Management under the newly approved CIWM / WAMITAB operator competence scheme. The recipients of the award are Mark Allen, waste resources manager (operations) and his colleague, Dan Jacobs, technician (household waste).

Speaking about the qualification the pair said: "The VRQ is a much more accessible way of learning. Because it is classroom-based over an intensive four-day period, with back-up assessment in our own time, it is far more realistic than the previous NVQ's site-based process where you can spend up to two years or more gathering your 'evidence'. It means newcomers to the industry now have a choice in how they achieve the legally required competence for low and medium risk activities."

The VRQ was delivered by SERAC, and managing director, Don Glaister, said: "We are delighted to have gained the first approval of this VRQ – it's an award that is all about delivering relevant learning with speed, efficiency and cost-effectiveness for operators in the waste sector, without lowering standards. It is exciting that there is now a choice of routes for employees to gain the statutory competence required in the waste management sector under the new Environmental Permitting Regulations."



Left to right: Lawrence Strong, director general of the awarding body, WAMITAB; award winners Dan Jacobs and Mark Allen of Norfolk County Council; and Don Glaister, managing director of national training company SERAC

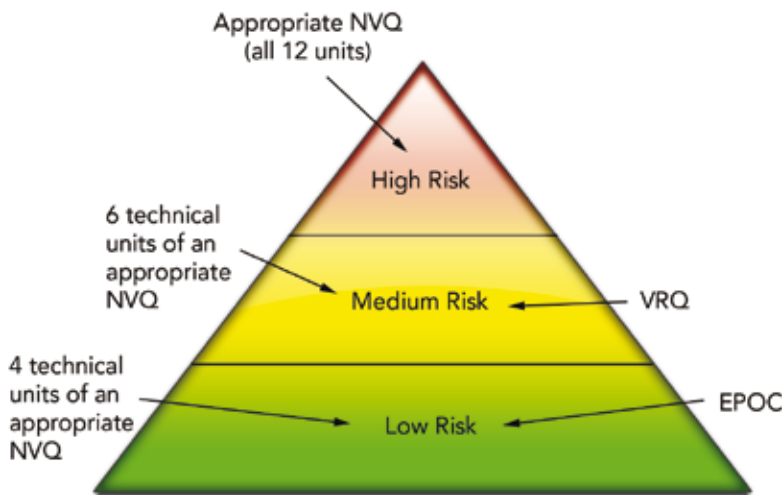


Figure 1: the awards in relation to risk tier (competence to proportional risk)

technically competent person who has not demonstrated continuing competence after this date will not be considered technically competent by the Environment Agency.

Continuing competence has to be demonstrated during every set two-year period. We strongly recommend you don't leave this test until the very end of that time. You can pass it at any stage during the two years.

What if I need to become a competent person?

If you are currently going through the permit application process for a new site, or you need to demonstrate competence as an additional person for an existing site, then you need to identify which qualification/course is applicable to you.

First, identify whether the facility is low, medium or high risk as denoted in the CIWM / WAMITAB scheme (Figure 1). If your facility is in the "high risk" group you need to undertake an appropriate NVQ – see WAMITAB for further details.

If your facility is in the "medium risk" group you have a choice between six specified technical units of a relevant NVQ or the VRQ Certificate in Wastes and Resource Management. This has specialist units for physical treatment and biological treatment, with land remediation and inert landfills becoming available shortly. The VRQ is a classroom-based course with an assignment to complete afterwards, which applies learning to the specific facility of that type. For further details of the NVQ or VRQ, including centres

approved to deliver the courses, contact WAMITAB.

For facilities in the "low risk" group you have a choice between completing four specified technical units of the relevant NVQ or a two-day assessed training course, the Environmental Permit Operators Certificate (EPOC). For further details of the NVQ units contact WAMITAB and for further details of the EPOC contact CIWM.

What if I need more time?

If you require a medium or high risk tier qualification, but can't get it before your site needs to become operational, then you can get a 12 month "grace" period by completing either the four specified units of the NVQ or the EPOC as a starter; this then gives you 12 months to complete the appropriate award. As with the previous system this does not apply to landfills.

If you are currently working towards your qualification under the previous scheme with a two-year grace period, your deadline is as previously agreed with the Environment Agency. However, you may use the new scheme to determine which qualification you need to get.

Can I get a higher qualification than my risk tier?

Absolutely; if you have a higher qualification that is relevant then you can use it for a lower risk facility. If you have done four or six units of the NVQ, it may be good for your personal development to gain the full NVQ qualification (and the subsequent CoTc if you request it.)

CIWM Says...

TECHNICAL COMPETENCE for waste managers has helped this industry raise standards over the last 15 years; now a new CIWM/WAMITAB operator competence scheme has been approved by Defra and the Welsh Assembly Government for England and Wales to improve the certificate of technical competence system.

Our industry is changing and this new scheme offers both flexibility and proportionality. It caters for different risk levels to reflect the growing diversity of waste treatment technologies; it provides the flexibility to accommodate individual learning preferences; and it brings in the concept of "continuing competence". We think individual waste managers will like it and that it will help us prove our fitness to do a difficult job.



Steve Lee, chief executive, CIWM

What do I do after I have my qualification?

Once you have your initial qualification you need to ensure that you keep up it up-to-date. You will need to demonstrate continuing competence every two years and a new syllabus will be published to guide your continuing development for each period.

Once you are confident that you are up-to-date you can arrange to sit a continuing competence test. You do not need to do this straight away. The first two-year competency period, from 1 March 2009 to 28 February 2011, does not apply to anyone undertaking a new qualification from now until the end of February 2011 as you should be up to date through your new qualification. ➤

Tell me more about continuing competence...

Those already competent under the previous scheme will need to demonstrate continuing competence in the first continuing competence period (1 March 2009 - 28 February 2011) and every subsequent two-year period. Those gaining their initial qualification under the new scheme before the end of that time will need to demonstrate continuing competence in the following two-year period (1 March 2011 - 28 February 2013) and every subsequent two-year period thereafter.

The syllabus will change every two years to reflect changes in legislation/best practice and guidance etc. Using the list of topics in the syllabus individuals/organisations should identify their development needs and ways of gaining appropriate updated knowledge. Some of you may not need to do anything more than you are already doing to remain up-to-date. Of course, one of the best ways to keep up-to-date and help you pass the continued competency test is to join CIWM. As a member you will receive information and support to help make sure you keep your knowledge "topped up".

The test itself will be a multiple choice question paper made up of questions related to both generic topics (applicable to everyone) and activity-specific topics you select in order to maintain competence in all areas relevant to you. Tests are undertaken at a range of test centres (50 across England and Wales) and venues and times will be bookable through WAMITAB's website. Further details will be available on the WAMITAB website as they become available. Appropriate photo ID will be required at the test centre, much like a driving theory test. [CIWM](http://www.ciwm.co.uk)

Further details of the scheme can be found at www.ciwm.co.uk or call +44 (0)1604 620426, or at www.wamitab.org.uk or call +44 (0)1604 231950

For information on becoming a CIWM member visit www.ciwm.co.uk/membership and see page 24

For more information on Environmental Permitting Operators Certificate training courses please contact the CIWM operations team on +44 (0)1064 620426 or email training@ciwm.co.uk

Risk	Description
High	Hazardous waste landfill (open and closed)
High	Non-hazardous waste landfill (open and closed)
High	Hazardous waste disposal (not incineration or landfill)
High	Recovery of oil/organic solvents
High	Cleaning/regeneration of carbon, charcoal or ion-exchange resins
High	Production of solid fuel from waste – involving use of heat
High	Recovery of hazardous waste
High (not covered in lower tiers)	Hazardous transfer/treatment
High	Hazardous waste transfer/treatment – clinical waste
High	WEEE ATF chemical processing
Medium	Deposit in lagoons of non-hazardous dredging sludges from waterways
Medium	Non-hazardous transfer, with or without treatment
Medium	Contaminated land remediation
Medium	Treatment of waste soils
Medium	Non-hazardous clinical waste transfer/treatment
Medium	Civic amenity sites/household waste recycling centres
Medium	Material recovery facilities
Medium	End of life vehicle facilities (vehicle depollution/storage prior to depollution)
Medium	Metal recovery site (wet scrap, eg oily metal swarf – free-flowing liquid)
Medium	Composting/biological treatment (including sewage sludge)
Medium	MBT
Medium	WEEE ATF – physical dismantling (including fragmentising)
Medium	Pet-crematoria/non-schedule 1 incinerators (EPR 07)
Medium	Mobile treatment facilities
Medium	Inert landfills (open and closed)
Low	In-house storage of waste
Low	Inert transfer/physical treatment
Low	MRS dry scrap – no free-flowing liquid (also to include separately collected batteries)
Low	WEEE (storage only)

The division of the activities within the table has been developed taking into account consultation responses and the requirements of the Environment Agency. Where a facility/permit authorises more than one activity the appropriate risk tier will be the higher tier

Table 1: allocation of waste management activities to high, medium and low risk competence tiers

WAMITAB Says...

IN ADDITION to the flexibility that the CIWM / WAMITAB competence scheme brings, an exciting new



aspect is the introduction of "continuing competence", which addresses how an individual maintains their competence over time. For the very first time any individual within the scheme will be able to demonstrate to the regulator (and the public at large) that they have kept their initial level(s) of competence up-to-date. This is a significant step forward as the industry continues to professionalise its image and performance.

Dr Lawrence Strong, director general, WAMITAB

