

New Service Launched to Avoid Major Peak in Covid Testing Waste



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With over 14 million employees now potentially eligible for Covid-19 workplace testing, one of the UK's leading specialist waste management companies, WasteCare, has launched an easy-to-use service to help businesses safely dispose of the waste generated from used test kits.

The UK government recently ramped up its workplace rapid testing programme, cutting the qualifying threshold for businesses to just 50 employees (from 250). This means that the testing regime could now be available to somewhere in the region of 43,000 businesses and 14.4 million employees*.

While a significant proportion of qualifying businesses have employees working from home, this dramatic escalation in testing has resulted in a large increase in the number of businesses now producing challenging waste. UK waste regulations mean this material must be correctly managed to avoid it presenting a health risk to others.

Waste produced from lateral flow antigen testing devices and PPE are classified as 'offensive waste' whilst the swabs and cartridges are also classified as 'non-hazardous chemical waste'. As a result, used items need to be stored and collected separately from all other types of waste. They must also be treated in properly permitted waste management facilities.

The simple, cost effective and environmentally compliant solution provides customers with the appropriate clinical waste bags or boxes for absorbent pads, vials and tissues as well as used PPE. This ensures customers are provided with the appropriate containment mechanism ensuring they can operate safely in the knowledge that their resulting waste is

stored compliantly prior to collection. Once collected, the waste is treated at WasteCare's high temperature incineration facility which also generates electricity from the energy recovered from the treatment process.

"Regular Covid-19 testing is something that is going to be with us for the foreseeable future" commented Wastecare's CEO, Peter Hunt. "The increased availability of lateral flow testing has resulted in large numbers of businesses producing clinical and offensive waste that would not ordinarily do so. To avoid a build-up of this waste, it is vital that these businesses are able to dispose of it safely and in a cost-effective manner. By keeping it separate from their general waste and treating it properly, we can ensure that testing waste does not present further health issues or support the spread of the virus."

Lateral flow device (LFD) testing is a fast and simple way to test people who do not have symptoms of COVID-19 but who may still be spreading the virus. In some circumstances, lateral flow tests can also be used for other diagnostic tasks.

The tests are easy to use and give results in 30 minutes. Those who test positive must immediately self-isolate to avoid passing the virus on to others.

Why lateral flow tests are being offered

Around 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 do not have symptoms, so a test that rapidly detects these otherwise hidden cases is a very useful additional tool for tackling the virus.

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