



UNDERSTANDING EFFLUENT AUDITS

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If your business outputs any waste water as part of its operations, it will be charged for trade effluent. Trade effluent costs can be high, but there are often ways of improving your business processes to save money. Better still, you can often make your operations more efficient and environmentally friendly into the bargain.

Carrying out a trade effluent audit can help your business understand its current usage, and identify opportunities for improvement.



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WHAT IS TRADE EFFLUENT?

In the Water Industry Act of 1991, trade effluent is defined as “any liquid, either with or without particles of matter in suspension in the liquid, which is wholly or partly produced in the course of any trade or industry carried on at a trade premises”.

In simple terms this is any waste water your business returns to public sewers as a result of your business operations (this does not include “domestic sewage” from toilets, or sinks used for hand washing). Trade effluent could include water from washing dishes in a restaurant, or water used for cooling in a manufacturing process, for example.

The output of trade effluent is controlled because it can contain a wide variety of harmful substances at different strengths. This has a knock-on effect on the treatment processes water companies need to use to make sure any risks are controlled. As a result, if your business needs to output trade effluent into the sewer system you’ll need to seek permission from your water company first. They’ll agree a “consent”, which sets a limit for the type, strength, and quantity of trade effluent your business is permitted to discharge, and calculate the charges your business will need to pay based on this. For some more harmful substances, classed as “special category” effluents, your business will also need the permission of the Environment Agency.



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WHAT IS A TRADE EFFLUENT AUDIT?

Trade effluent can make up a significant percentage of a business's water bill. In some cases, effluent costs can be higher than the cost of your fresh water usage. For that reason, trade effluent should be a high priority for your business if you want to save money on your water bills. A trade effluent audit looks at your current trade effluent output, and identifies ways your business might be able to save money.

Since trade effluent output is controlled, there are also compliance issues to consider. A trade effluent audit will check to make sure that your business is operating within the limits of its consent, and that any conditions attached to it are being met.



WHAT'S COVERED IN A TRADE EFFLUENT AUDIT?

A trade effluent audit will typically look at the following areas:

Your current usage

During the audit, experienced consultants will look at your current effluent discharge levels to help you understand how much they're contributing to your business costs, and whether there are any usage trends. They could also benchmark them against other similar businesses to help you understand how you compare.

Your consent and compliance

The auditing consultants will check your current consent, and make sure that your business is compliant with any monitoring or treatment requirements attached to it. If your business needs support in staying compliant with their consent, they'll help you develop straightforward processes to stay on top of your responsibilities.

Opportunities for improvement

After understanding your current usage, our consultants will look at your business processes and ways of working to identify ways you could save money on trade effluent costs.

These might include:

- 💧 Reducing the amount of trade effluent your business outputs, for example by re-using grey water or by changing the chemicals used within your business processes
- 💧 Reducing the strength of the trade effluent discharged, either by pre-treating or filtering it
- 💧 Re-purposing trade effluent instead of discharging it, for example by processing it into a new raw material which can be sold on.



HOW CAN A TRADE EFFLUENT AUDIT BENEFIT MY BUSINESS?

A trade effluent audit can give your business a clear picture of your current usage, and help you to stay compliant with any requirements imposed by the water company as part of your consent document.

It can also identify ways to save money by reducing your trade effluent output – for many businesses this is the largest part of their water bill, so the savings can be significant. A trade effluent audit might even be able to identify more efficient ways of working, which also help your business to save money on its mains water bill. In some cases, an audit might identify opportunities to turn a waste product into a new revenue opportunity, turning a cost into an ongoing profit generator for your business.

Finally, by reducing its trade effluent output, your business will not only save money, but reduce its environmental impact too.

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR TRADE EFFLUENT BILLS

Total Water Solutions work with businesses in a wide range of sectors to help them understand and manage their trade effluent costs. By building a clear picture of your current usage patterns and identifying a range of opportunities for improvement, our expert consultants can help you save money and stay compliant with your trade effluent consent.



To find out more read our [case studies](#), or [contact us](#).



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