Dewatering Abstraction Licence Guidance

Dewatering is generally no longer exempt from needing an abstraction licence.

There are 2 remaining exceptions:

1. Small scale dewatering
A 6 month exemption will still apply when water is discharged to a soakaway immediately.

When water from small scale dewatering is not discharged to a soakaway immediately, a 6 month exemption will still apply when the abstraction is:

- less than 100 cubic metres per day and located more than 500 metres from a designated site or 250 metres from a spring, well or borehole.
- less than 50 cubic metres a day and located less than 500 metres from a designated site or 250 metres from a spring, well or borehole.

**Note on soakaways:** There is no legal definition of a soakaway and we decide each application on a case by case basis. In general, a soakaway can include methods such as infiltration trenches, permeable pavements or soakaway pits.

Please contact us to discuss if your dewatering would count as small scale.

2. Emergency abstraction
Operators can abstract above volumetric licence restrictions when there is a threat to human beings, serious damage to the works, or serious damage to the environment.


Types of abstraction licenses for dewatering
There are two types of licence that are mainly used for dewatering:

**Full licence:**
A full licence allows the abstraction of more than 20 cubic metres of water per day from a surface, tidal, or groundwater source for a period of 28 days or more.

**customer service line** 03706 506 506  
**floodline** 03459 88 11 88  
**incident hotline** 0800 80 70 60
This application costs £135, plus an annual subsistence fee (based on the quantity of water on the licence and the purpose of abstraction).

Transfer licence:
A transfer licence allows the abstraction of water from one source of supply over a period of 28 days or more for the purpose of transferring the water to another source of supply, or between two points within the same source of supply (for dewatering purposes).

The design of the dewatering site may require a full licence based on lagoons and pumped/gravity discharges at the site.

This application costs £1500, with no annual subsistence fee.

Abstractions for less than 28 continuous days
Since the 1st January 2018, abstractions for less than 28 continuous days have not been exempt. You must apply for this type of licence through our normal licencing procedures. Please call us discuss this further.

How to apply for an abstraction licence for a previously exempt activity
You must complete application forms WR344 and WR346 and send them to us along with the correct application fee. Use guidance notes WR345 and WR347 to help you. Information is also on our website here.

Application Fees
Information on applications fees is at:

Application form 346 part B, on this website, sets out how you can make your payment. This information is on page 9 of the document.

What if I need some help?
We are here to support you during this transitional period. To discuss how this affects you and what you need to do please call us on 03708 506506 or email us at enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk as soon as possible.