

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Area 5E, Ergon House
Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 2AL
Telephone 08459 33 55 77
Website www.defra.gov.uk



Gary Jones
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Our ref: RFI 5133

Your ref: request-138046-
65961b6d

11th December 2012]

Dear Mr Jones

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Safety Guidelines - Normal Levels - Contaminants

Thank you for your request for information about safety guideline levels for testing chemicals or contaminants in the environment which we received on 13 November. We have handled your request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs). I am responding to your request in respect of contaminants in air. I understand you have now received responses from water quality and soil quality colleagues

The information that you have requested is available from a number of web sources in the public domain;

The government's former Expert Panel on Air Quality Standards (EPAQS) provided guidance on the levels of a range of substances of concern in ambient air. These reports are available from either;

<http://archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/air/airquality/panels/aqs/>

or for older reports;

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20060715141954/http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/airquality/aqs/index.htm#fr>

Many of the EPAQS guidelines were used to generate national air quality standards which are used for local or national air quality assessment as discussed in the National Air Quality Strategy. The Strategy also covers the legislative standards derived from European sources and is available from;

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/air/air-quality/approach/>

Some of the EPAQS guidelines were adopted by the environmental regulators (the Environment Agency of England and Wales, the Scottish Environment Agency and the



Northern Ireland Environment Agency for use in guidance to applicants they produce to enable applicants to assess the significance of emissions from installations that are applying for environmental permits. This is not however the same conceptual use as health based guidelines. The Guidance the regulators have issued is available from; <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/topics/permitting/36414.aspx>

EPAQs work has now been subsumed into the Department of Health's Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollution (COMEAP). More information on their work will be available from their website.

Data on levels of air pollutants in the UK from Defra funded work is available together with contract and project reports from; <http://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/>

As the information is publicly available from the above source, we are exempt from providing a copy under section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act.

I attach an annex giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service that you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me.

Yours sincerely

Peter Coleman
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Email xxxxx.xxxxxxx@xxxxx.xxx.xxx.xx

Annex A

Complaints

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Mike Kaye, Head of Information Standards, Area 1B, Ergon House, Horseferry Road, London, SW1P 2AL (email: xxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxx.xxx.xxx) and he will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure are on our [website](#).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please note that generally the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF