

Closed loop ground source heating and cooling systems: when you need a permit

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Check if you need an environmental permit for a closed loop ground source heating and cooling system.

Overview

You may need to get a permit from the Environment Agency before you can install and run a new closed loop ground source heating and cooling system. This is a system that:

- is fully sealed
- does not take water from the environment
- does not discharge water or fluids to the environment

Boreholes or pipework used for these systems are fully sealed and have no direct connection with any groundwater.

The Environment Agency regulates these systems to protect the environment.

Existing systems installed before 2 October 2023

If your ground source heating and cooling system was installed before 2 October 2023, it is an 'existing' system.

If so, you do not need to meet the exemption conditions or have an environmental permit to run the system. But the system must not cause pollution.

New systems installed on or after 2 October 2023

If your ground source heating and cooling system is installed on or after 2 October 2023, it is a 'new' system.

If you're looking to install and run a new system, you must do one of the following:

- meet all the criteria in the exemption conditions for systems in low environmental risk settings
- meet all the conditions in the regulatory position statement 'Discharge of heat to ground from a single closed loop ground source heating and cooling system supplying residential premises: RPS 307'
- get a standard rules permit
- get a bespoke permit

Exemptions for new systems in low environmental risk settings

If you meet all the exemption conditions, you do not need a permit for a new closed loop ground source heating and cooling system.

Check the guidance on the exemption conditions and how to meet them.

RPS 307

If your system does not meet all the exemption conditions, check if you can meet all the conditions in the regulatory position statement 'Discharge of heat to ground from a single closed loop ground source heating and cooling system supplying residential premises: RPS 307'.

If your system cannot meet either the exemption conditions or the conditions in RPS 307, you will need to apply for an environmental permit.

Standard rules permits for new systems

Standard rules permits are suitable for activities where:

- the general risks are well understood and reduced
- a site specific risk assessment is not necessary because of this

The Environment Agency held a public consultation on proposed standard rules permits for cemetery developments between 1 April and 24 June 2025. For a summary of this consultation, see [Standard rules permit consultation number 30: summary of consultation responses](#). Following this response, the Environment Agency intends to update and publish the new standard rules permits by the end of June 2026.

Bespoke permits for new systems

You must apply for a bespoke permit if your new closed loop ground source heating and cooling system:

- cannot meet all the conditions in the exemption criteria
- cannot meet all the conditions in RPS 307
- cannot meet the conditions in a standard rules permit, when they are available

To apply for a new, bespoke groundwater activity permit for a closed loop ground source heating and cooling system, fill in the Part B6 form.

You must also fill in part:

- A: about you
- B2: new bespoke
- F1: charges and declarations

You will need to use an Adobe Acrobat product to complete the forms.

Contact the Environment Agency

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/closed-loop-ground-source-heating-and-cooling-systems-when-you-need-a-permit>