

The state of the waste carrier register

The Environment Agency's public register for England, as at 23 August 2026

Every business that carries waste in England has to be on one public register, and a supplier who gives you their registration number is offering it as proof of two things: that they are allowed to take your waste, and that you can check who they are. For a large part of the register the first is not what the number says at all, and the second is a piece of work the register leaves to you. Nothing on it tells you which part you are looking at.

WHICH NUMBERS COME FROM WHERE

419,112 registrations on the Environment Agency's register: 146,011 upper tier and 273,101 lower tier.

Of those, 197,419 give their applicant type as Company. Sole traders, partnerships, charities and public bodies carry no company number by definition and are left out of every company-number figure below.

Of those companies, 96,445 record which company they are. Companies House enters only for that group, and for no other figure here.

100,974

registrations call themselves a company and do not give its number

All of them are lower tier, and lower tier is the part people misread. **Upper tier lets a business carry waste that somebody else produced. Lower tier does not.** A lower tier number is a builder taking away their own rubble, not a firm licensed to take away yours. So a contractor who answers "we are registered" with a CBDL number is offering proof of something the number does not say. 79,608 of them do at least put Limited or Ltd in the name, so there is something to search for; 21,366 give you not even that. But a name is not an identifier. Names repeat, companies change them, and matching one by hand is a guess until you have checked the address too. The upper tier is the opposite: every one of its 90,425 company registrations records the number, and the number is what makes the check certain.

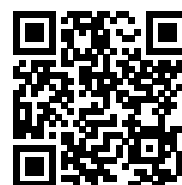
If you engage contractors who take waste away, the number that matters is the one beginning CBDU, and whether it is still live today. Our supplier check reads it against this morning's register and does the Companies House join for you, so a match is a match rather than a likely-looking name.

Counted from: LOWER tier registrations whose applicant type is Company (106,994 of them).

What it does not mean: It does not mean the other entries are anonymous. It means the name is all you have, and a name is not an identifier: names repeat, companies change them, and a match is a guess until the address has been checked too.

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62,602

lower tier registrations have not been touched since 2016

A lower tier registration has no expiry date and is never renewed, so nothing ever prompts anybody to confirm it is still true. It will still be showing as current on the register long after a business has stopped trading, and there is no state it can reach that would warn you. A registration that cannot lapse cannot tell you anything has changed.

A number that never expires is not evidence that anybody has checked it recently. Where a supplier's registration matters to you, what matters is whether it is upper tier and when it runs out.

Counted from: lower tier registrations first registered in 2016 or earlier.

What it does not mean: It does not mean these businesses have stopped trading, or that anything is wrong with them. The register records nothing either way, which is the point.

2,118

upper tier registrations expire within 30 days

8,961

expire within 3 months

Upper tier is the one that does lapse, every three years, and it lapses quietly. The register does not write to the businesses that hired them, and the contractor whose renewal slipped will not either. If one of these is on your approved list, the first you would hear of it is when somebody asks you to produce the paperwork.

Our monitoring does exactly this: we read the register every morning and write to you the day one of your suppliers lapses, so the paperwork is never the thing that finds out first.

Counted from: upper tier registrations with an expiry date.

3,203

live registrations are held by a company in trouble

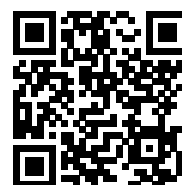
Of the 96,445 registrations that record a company number, this many belong to a company Companies House lists as in liquidation, in administration, in a voluntary arrangement, in receivership, or with a proposal to strike it off. The registration stays on the waste register either way. The two bodies are not connected, and neither of them is going to tell you.

A firm can be perfectly registered to carry your waste and be days from ceasing to exist. Joining the two records is a thing somebody has to do on purpose, so we do it for every supplier on a customer's list.

Counted from: registrations whose company is in liquidation, administration, a voluntary arrangement, receivership, or has a proposal to strike off against it.

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1,316

registrations left the register between 2026-07-30 and 2026-08-23

Present one morning and absent the next, against 3,587 that appeared and 1,166 that were renewed. The register publishes only current entries, so a disappearance is the only signal there is, and it is a signal nobody receives. A supplier list checked once is a supplier list that ages under you.

Whatever you checked at the start of the month is not what the register says today.

Counted from: registrations present on 2026-07-30 and absent by 2026-08-23.

What it does not mean: The register does not say why an entry disappeared. Expiry, revocation, cancellation and a business closing all look identical from outside.

HOW WE DID IT

We pull the complete Environment Agency register every morning, both tiers, and keep each day's copy. The counts above come from that whole file: not from a sample, and not from the much smaller set of businesses we publish as a directory.

The two tiers are different things, not two grades of the same thing. Upper tier is for businesses that carry waste somebody else produced: it is paid for and expires every three years. Lower tier covers a business moving waste it produced itself, is free, and never expires. Where a figure applies to one tier only, it says so.

A disappearance is not a revocation. The register publishes current entries only and gives no reason when one goes, so we count disappearances and call them that.

A missing company is not a dissolved company. The Companies House snapshot holds live companies only, so a number absent from it may belong to a company that has been dissolved or to one incorporated after the snapshot was taken.

No business is named anywhere in this report. Every figure is an aggregate.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

All of this is readable from the public register, and none of it reaches the people who need it. That gap is what we built. Bring us the suppliers you already use and we will tell you where each of them stands.

- 1 Paste your supplier list into our checker. It reads every name and number against this morning's register and marks the ones that are lower tier, expiring or gone.
- 2 Look at what the register alone cannot show you. We join each registration to Companies House, so a firm that is properly registered and behind a failing company shows up as both.
- 3 Let us keep watching. We read the register every morning, compare it with yesterday's, and write to you the day something on your list changes.

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