



CESSATION OF OUT OF HOURS PERMITTING FUNCTION

As advised to O&GUK on 23/09/2021, OPRED intends to cease its out of hours permitting function from 10/01/2022.

OPRED has reviewed a number of internal processes and procedures, including the current mechanism to issue or vary regulatory permits and consents outwith business hours. One of the conclusions of that review was that the out of hours permitting function should cease. It is therefore intended that from 10/01/2022 OPRED will no longer consider applications for new or varied permits/consents outwith normal business hours.

OPRED normal business hours are 08:30 – 17:00 Monday-Thursday, 08:30 – 16:30 Friday.

Data shows that on average only one permit per month is requested to be varied outwith normal business hours across all of industry. Given that low frequency, OPRED does not anticipate that this change should give rise to any significant increase in non-compliance with regulatory requirements. Operators are responsible for ensuring that they have the appropriate permit and operations management systems in place to address the cessation of this out of hours service and they operate in accordance with all applicable regulatory requirements. OPRED would also remind industry of (i) the recent changes to the permitting of PLONOR chemicals and to the use of contingency chemicals for aborted drilling or cementing operations and (ii) that chemical permit conditions include an allowance of 10% for use and discharge beyond the stated amount.

OPRED will continue to respond to any non-compliance notifications in a consistent and proportionate manner, in alignment with OPRED's enforcement policy. Whilst OPRED may liaise with permit holders following non-compliances to drive improvements to permit management procedures, it is not anticipated that such non-compliances will lead to an increase in formal enforcement action by OPRED, unless the non-compliances are serious and/or occur repeatedly.

You should note that any application to vary a permit/consent which is submitted during business hours will not necessarily be concluded at that time. Operators must submit applications to OPRED in sufficient time to allow for the application to be appropriately assessed, including any statutory external consultation. As you will be aware, OPRED has always endeavoured to turn around applications in a timeframe which meets the operator's requirements, often well within the stipulated review periods, and will continue to do so.

OPRED will amend the wording on all permits and consents to remove the reference to out of hours variations. It should be noted this is not a change to permit conditions.

OPRED has delayed the cessation of this function until 10/01/2022 to allow permit holders to review their own permit management systems in light of this change.



Offshore Petroleum Regulator
for Environment & Decommissioning

For the avoidance of doubt there is no change to the out of hours emergency response function to offshore incidents and pollution events.

If you have any queries or comments on the above, please send them to OPRED's Business Support Team on BST@beis.gov.uk