

Operational Risk Appraisal (Opra)

Waste operations and installations

To make sure we look after communities and the environment we need to be able to focus our efforts on higher-risk activities and poor performers. The Operational risk appraisal (Opra) tool gives us a consistent way to assess the environmental risk of running an installation or waste operation. We use it to:

- Help us plan how to use our resources
- Report on how the operators we regulate are performing; and
- Work out charges

What activities are covered by Opra?

Our approach to authorising activities under the Environmental Permitting Regulations has three tiers.

Tier 1 – These are registrations for the simplest activities. The Opra banded profile scoring system doesn't apply to registrations.

Tier 2 – These are for activities where we make a decision whether or not to grant a permit. We use risk-based bands to work out which activities come into tier 2.

Tier 2 activities have fixed charges when you first apply for a permit as well as for varying, transferring or surrendering it. We may use the 'compliance rating attribute' of Opra to adjust the yearly subsistence charges for a permit after it's been issued depending on how well the operator meets the conditions of a permit.

Tier 3 – These are for the most complicated and high risk activities we regulate. These permits take account of specific local issues and the activities carried out on site. Some of the permit conditions will be non-standard and are written specifically for each activity. Tier 3 permits use an assessment based on five points, known as attributes, described below. We give each attribute one or more lettered bands. These bands give a site what we call an Opra banded profile.



What are the Opra attributes?

The five attributes describe the types of risks we assess.

Complexity – the type of activities covered by your permit. This attribute looks at:

- what you do and what hazardous materials you have at your site;
- what you release or could release into the environment; and
- the work we need to do to make sure you are complying with the conditions in your permit

Emissions and inputs – the amounts you are allowed to put into and release from an activity. This attribute looks at:

- releases to air, water, land, waste coming onto and being transferred off site

Location – the state of the environment around your site. This attribute looks at:

- how far your site is from where people live, work and play;
- how far your site is from areas that have been given special legal protection, for example Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- what surface and ground waters are near to you and if your site could be flooded;
- the potential for a direct release to water and what you have in place to stop it; and
- whether your site is in an area your local council is targeting to improve air quality.

Operator performance – your management systems and enforcement history. This attribute has two parts:

- the management systems and procedures you use to help you keep to the conditions of your permit; and
- recent formal enforcement action taken at a site by regulatory organisations.

Compliance rating – how well you comply with your permit conditions. Using our compliance classification scheme (CCS), this attribute looks at:

- whether you have kept to the conditions of your permit;
- how serious the condition breaches were;
- work we need to do to deal with you if you failed to keep to the conditions of your permit.
- Dependent on the site, each attribute is rated on a banded scale of A to E, or in the case of 'Compliance rating' A to F. An 'A' rating means less 'regulatory effort' is needed from us, while 'E' or 'F' results in more regulatory effort to reflect the increased environmental risk of the activities and to help operators keep to the conditions of their permit.

We work out the compliance rating using a points-based compliance scoring system (Compliance Classification Scheme - CCS) over the course of each calendar year, January to December. The compliance rating reflects the work we need to do in the future to regulate a site and is used to adjust the yearly subsistence charge for most tier 2 and 3 permits.

The data

The data is specifically for waste operations and installations and is provided in an Excel spreadsheet. The data fields include:

- Permit reference
- Operator name
- Site name, address and postcode
- Site activity
- Compliance rating attribute band
- Complexity attribute band(s)
- Emissions and inputs attribute band(s)
- Location attribute band
- Operator performance attribute band
- Total profile score

It will also include an explanation of some of the terms in the column headings.

This data is provided under a conditional licence, details of which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environment-agency-conditional-licence/environment-agency-conditional-licence#you-must-where-you-do-any-of-the-above>.

Where can I find further information?

You can download guidance on Opra for Environmental Permitting from <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/operational-risk-appraisal-opra>

You can view the latest version of our charging scheme at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-permitting-ep-charges-scheme-april-2014-to-march-2015>

For specific sites you can speak to the local officer for any site that we regulate. Telephone 03708 506 506 to be put through to the relevant local office or e-mail enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

