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Guide To CIRIA C736

Overview

CIRIA C736: *Containment systems for the prevention of pollution* provides clear, practical guidance for operators managing materials that could pose a risk to the environment. The standard was developed following significant containment failures—most notably the 2005 Buncefield incident—which highlighted the need for stronger controls on secondary and tertiary containment.

The document sets out how containment systems should be assessed, designed, constructed and maintained to prevent releases caused by spills, firewater run-off or flooding. Its principles apply across a wide range of sites, from single-tank installations to large industrial facilities with multiple storage and process areas.

By adopting the approaches outlined in CIRIA C736, businesses can ensure that containment systems remain reliable throughout their operational life, strengthen their pollution-prevention measures, and demonstrate a proactive commitment to environmental protection.

Regulatory Context and Compliance Drivers

Several UK regulations set out the legal duties for preventing pollution and ensuring containment systems perform effectively. Key requirements come from:

- Environmental Permitting Regulations (England & Wales) and Pollution Prevention and Control Regulations (Scotland)
- Oil Storage Regulations across all UK nations
- Pollution Prevention and Control Act 1999
- COMAH Regulations 2015 for higher-risk sites

These laws define the minimum standards operators must meet, while industry guidance such as CIRIA C736 explains how good practice should be applied in the design, construction and maintenance of containment systems. Complying with legislation is essential, and demonstrating alignment with recognised standards shows that all reasonably practicable steps have been taken to reduce pollution risk; in the event of an incident, regulators typically review not only legal compliance but whether appropriate guidance was followed to support safe and responsible operation.

Penalties and Reputational Impact

Poorly designed, constructed or maintained containment systems increase the likelihood of pollutants escaping and causing environmental harm. When failures occur, businesses may face substantial fines—often higher where recognised guidance has not been followed—as well as



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operational disruption during clean-up and investigation. Beyond financial loss, pollution incidents can damage a company's reputation and undermine confidence in its ability to operate safely and responsibly.

Practical Application

Successful implementation of CIRIA C736 relies on ensuring that secondary and tertiary containment systems are correctly designed, constructed and capable of safely retaining materials that could harm the environment. High-integrity containment reduces the likelihood of failures and protects operators from future liabilities.

Tank Consults inspection service is designed to ensure your containment systems remain fully compliant and fit for purpose, helping you demonstrate that all practicable steps have been taken to minimise the consequences of a primary containment failure. We carry out thorough, scheduled inspections and deliver detailed reports, providing clear evidence of responsible management and swift resolution of any issues identified.

By partnering with us, you benefit from experienced design & build professionals who handle inspections, maintain comprehensive documentation, and deliver any remedial works needed to always keep your containment systems compliant and operational.

How Our Inspection Service Keeps You Compliant

- **Correct specification of containment** We assess your systems against CIRIA C736 and all relevant standards, ensuring your containment is designed and installed to meet legal and best practice requirements.
- **Routine and detailed inspections** Our service includes regular checks and comprehensive periodic inspections, supporting ongoing compliance and optimal performance of your containment systems.
- **Swift resolution of issues** We promptly address any defects or non-compliance, carrying out immediate repairs or developing a risk-based improvement plan for larger works as required.
- **Specialist support at every stage** Our team provides expert guidance, manages all inspection and maintenance activities, and keeps your documentation up to date, giving you confidence in your organisation's ongoing compliance and environmental performance.

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