

Newsletter from October 25th, 2007

1. Comments on the Greenpeace iPhone study!

- *Greenpeace last week released an analysis, in which it claims the new Apple iPhone contains a range of potentially dangerous chemicals!*
- *According to BSEF, all of the substances reported by Greenpeace are approved for use!*

The environmental group Greenpeace last week released an analysis of the new Apple iPhone, in which it claims the product contains a range of potentially dangerous chemicals. According to BSEF, all of the substances reported by Greenpeace are approved for use, and provide critical performance and safety functions in a wide range of electronic products.

Among the substances reported by Greenpeace are brominated flame retardants (BFRs), which are commonly used in electronics to provide a high level fire safety - in certain applications, they are the most effective products available. Preventing fires in electronics is particularly important, as they often contain heat sources and significant amounts of highly flammable plastics. Recent incidents with music players and computer batteries bursting into flames illustrate the dangers.

The Greenpeace report does not say which BFRs are present in the iPhone because it does not know. As the report notes, the analytical equipment used for their report can only detect the presence of an element, such as bromine, but not specific chemicals. Therefore, the report speculates about what substances might be present, and raises an alarm without any basis for doing so.

Even according to the Greenpeace study, the iPhone complies with all EU regulatory requirements. The brominated flame retardant most likely used in the iPhone is actually a reactive - i.e. it reacts with other substances to form a plastic and, once reacted, it is also no longer available to the environment. Therefore, the Greenpeace report is incorrect in its assertions about the potential for releases to the environment.

Furthermore, as a result of the EU's WEEE Directive, printed circuit boards such as those used in the iPhone are separated out before being recycled or recovered, in large part because they contain significant amounts of precious metals. Regulations similar to WEEE are being implemented in numerous other places around the world.

Finally, Greenpeace offers no constructive alternative for providing fire safety in electronic equipment and fails to note that BFRs are among the most tested and well-known flame retardants currently available. While alternative substances do exist, none are as well known or as well tested.

Flame retardants play a critical role in protecting the public against the very real dangers of fire and the importance of their use in consumer electronics is recognized by responsible electronics manufacturers. Given this critical public safety function, common sense supports using substances that are already compliant with existing regulations, such as REACH and WEEE, rather than using untested or unknown "alternatives".

Reporting its finding, Greenpeace says that it found chemicals that have or are in the process of being eliminated by other mobile phone manufacturers. According to Greenpeace, the iPhone contains brominated compounds, indicating the presence of brominated flame retardants BFRs, and PVCs. A total of 18 individual components and/or materials in the iPhone were tested using XRF (X-Ray Fluorescence spectrometry). XRF analysis can, however, only detect the presence of bromine on the surface of components, rather than specific chemicals in specific concentrations, BSEF said.

BSEF is the international organisation of the bromine chemical industry, whose remit is to inform stakeholders and commission science on brominated chemicals such as flame retardants.

Source: evertiq

2. RoHS – non compliance!

- *A UK company was accused of marketing leadcontaining products that violated the RoHS restrictions on lead!*
- *Scandinavian countries are testing products after a massive sweep across Denmark, Sweden and Finland!*

According to an article from EETimes online from 15 October 2007 the electronics industry has seen its first prosecution for noncompliance with the RoHS directive.

At the end of September, a UK company was accused of marketing leadcontaining products that violated the RoHS restrictions on lead. This was found out by the RoHS team at the UK's National Weights and Measures Laboratory, which is in charge of compliance testing.

The company admitted guilt and the matter was settled without financial penalty because the level of failure wasn't serious enough to warrant public disclosure. A documented warning, which can support legal action if the company has further violations, has been filed with the enforcement authorities.

The British lab has some compliance advice for EEE producers: The first is to watch outsourcing, because that is where a company tends to lose control of the production process. Second, companies running RoHS and non-RoHS lines should focus attention on preventing cross-contamination.

The British lab is continuing the enforcement by buying off-the-shelf products -some on the Internet - for testing.

Due to EETimes also Scandinavian countries are testing products after a massive sweep across Denmark, Sweden and Finland. Officials selected a range of consumer items from 25 categories and are examining them for RoHS violations. Results are expected by December 2007.

According to the article of EETimes already earlier this year, Denmark nearly had a RoHS prosecution on noncompliant disposable cameras. Denmark's Environmental Protection Agency found some noncompliant units. The importer removed the cameras from the Danish market, and authorities considered the matter resolved.

Source: KERP

3. WEEE & RoHS – Commission to start legal proceedings against eight member states!

- *For failing to transpose certain provisions of the WEEE Directive!*
- *If the member state still fails to comply, the Commission can bring the case before the European Court of justice!*

The European Commission is to begin legal proceedings against three member states – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – for failing to transpose certain provisions of the WEEE Directive (2002/96/EC). Shortcomings (which vary from country to country) include incorrect or missing requirements, non-compliant collection and treatment provisions and failure to cover waste exports.

The three member states will receive a letter of formal notice, which is the first stage in the infringement procedure. Further action will depend on how the three respond by a specified date, usually within two months.

The Commission is also to send first written warnings to six member states – Belgium, Denmark, Lithuania, Malta, Finland and Sweden – for failing to properly transpose the RoHS Directive (2002/95/EC). Again, shortcomings vary, but some are common to several member states: incorrect or missing definitions of the concept of 'producer', inappropriate or missing penalties for violations of the Directive and a failure to specify that the Directive applies without prejudice to EU legislation on safety and health requirements and specific waste legislation.

What happens next? If the Commission is not satisfied with the replies of the member states concerned, it may decide to issue a Reasoned Opinion which is in effect a final written warning. This states the reasons why the Commission considers that the member state has infringed EU law and calls upon the member state to comply within a specified period. If the member state still fails to comply, the Commission can bring the case before the European Court of justice.

Source: perchards.com