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FOREWORD

This newsletter aims to provide a platform for objective and scientific information on a subject often scrutinised by regulatory authorities, namely the life cycle of PVC and its applications. In this issue, some of the latest studies or reports related to the PVC life cycle are reported. We hope that this will help you to find your way in this debate.

The previous editions of the newsletter as well as this one are also available, with a convenient classification system by theme, on the website: www.tracingpapers.org.

EU: Note from the EU Commission regarding "Acidity" as additional classification parameter concerning Classes of reaction to fire performance for cables.

An expert working group on fire-related issues (Directive 89/106/EEC) has elaborated details regarding Classes of reaction to fire performance for cables. Most of the expert working group supported the inclusion of "Acidity" as additional classification parameter for most of the classes of reaction to fire performance for cables because *the release of "acidity" in the case of fire is frequently considered as a risk for the safety of people and goods*. One of the arguments considered is that *acidity is widely considered, for the time being, as the best possible approach to the toxicity requirements developed, or under development, in some European countries*. Contrary to this position, there are views that "Acidity" should not be an additional classification parameter for any of the classes of reaction to fire performance for cables: *while indeed toxic fumes are one of the main fire hazards, acidity is an inadequate parameter for assessing the actual toxicity to people and effects on equipment. Nearly all burning materials release toxic gases, especially carbon monoxide, which is widely recognized as the biggest toxic hazard in fires. Acidity is considered to be a more than inadequate substitute for proper toxicity and equipment performance criteria. Its inclusion would prevent the development and implementation of more sound safety criteria, thus ultimately being detrimental for safety*.

Reference: EU Commission- Enterprise Directorate General - Single Market : regulatory environment, standardisation and New Approach, Construction, Brussels, 23 September 2004 G5/ D(2004) CONSTRUCT 04/652

INT: International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) puts forward a totally different approach on acidity as criteria for cable fire toxicity.

In their resolution IEC/TC 89, IEC considers that taking acidity for the time being as the best possible approach to the toxicity requirements is contrary to their TC89 guidance. For IEC, acidity and toxicity are separate and distinct phenomena. They cannot be equated and it is technically unsound to do so. Many toxicants, notably carbon monoxide, are not acids and many acids are not normally considered as being toxic. Acidity has relevance to property damage but not to toxicity. Use of acidity as a basis on which to assess toxicity of fire effluent may provide an illusion of life safety which in fact does not exist, because the most common toxicant (carbon monoxide) is not taken into account. IEC has published guidance documents and a test method on toxicity.

Reference: IEC TC 89 RESOLUTION Albuquerque NM, 4th Nov 2004—[http://domino.iec.ch/preview/info_iec60695-7-1\[ed2.0\]b.pdf](http://domino.iec.ch/preview/info_iec60695-7-1[ed2.0]b.pdf)

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US: USGBC draft report shows vinyl building products have comparable impacts to products made of competing materials.

A new draft report from the U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC) PVC Task Group finds that the environmental and health impacts of vinyl used in building products are comparable to those of competing materials. These conclusions are quite similar to the recent LCA assessment done by the EU Commission (Tracing Paper no 13). Some uses of vinyl have greater impact while others have less impact. The Task Group recommended against a credit for excluding vinyl in the LEED rating system (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). This rating system is one of the most popular, fastest-growing rating systems for "green" building in use today. The Task Group acknowledged that data gaps exist and pointed out that additional research needs to be done on the risks associated with competing materials. The PVC Task Group was formed in 2002 to evaluate vinyl as a building material in four product areas: drain/waste/vent pipe, windows, siding and flooring. The Task Group's findings combine life-cycle and risk-assessment analyses. USGBC invites comments on the report, which are due Feb. 15.

Reference: USGBC's web site for the Task Group review, http://www.usgbc.org/Docs/LEED_tsac/USGBC_TSAC_PVC_Draft_Report_12-17-04..pdf

EU: PVC industry very concerned by EU decision to misuse the precautionary principle to restrict use of phthalates in toys.

Following the decision by the EU Competitiveness Council to seek a permanent ban on the use of DBP, DEHP and BBP in all children's toys and childcare items and a ban on the use of three others - DINP, DIDP and DNOP - in toys and childcare items that can be put in the mouth by children under three years old the European PVC industry expressed its concern that political decisions are being made which misuse the precautionary principle. DINP has undergone an EU Scientific Risk Assessment and it has been agreed that children are not at risk from the use of DINP in toys. DINP has also been investigated by the Consumer Product Safety Commission in the United States and it also confirmed that there is no demonstrated health risk from its use in toys. However there is an opposing view which was made by the Scientific Committee on Toxicity, Ecotoxicity and the Environment in its opinion on the "Assessment of the Bioavailability of Certain Elements in Toys" which denied that there was no risk from DINP and which stated that EU policy is to give a "high priority to the protection of health of children" (EU White Paper on Environment and Health 2003).

ECVM considers nevertheless very concerning that the EU is forcing substitution when less is known about the alternatives than the existing substances

Reference: ECVM position Paper. Martyn Griffiths, Communications Manager ECVM tel +32 2 676 74 43 Email: martyn.griffiths@plasticseurope.org

Basel Convention: Technical guidelines for the identification and environmentally sound management of plastic wastes and for their disposal.

These technical guidelines provide general guidance on the identification, environmentally sound management and disposal (recovery and final disposal of plastic wastes). Normally, Basel Convention technical guidelines apply to those wastes which are considered hazardous under the terms of Basel Convention, which require special consideration. These technical guidelines have been deliberately extended to include all polymer and plastic types, of which no single one is considered hazardous up to now. Waste management policy focuses on waste hierarchy giving priority to wastes prevention or reduction (including the elimination of impediments and distortions that encourage the over-production of wastes) followed by re-use, recycling, recovery and residual management. Such a strategy includes an integrated approach to waste management with an emphasis on material recycling and should mainly contribute to solve potential waste management problems in emerging countries.

Reference: Conference of the parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal. Sixth meeting Geneva, 9-13 December 2002. http://www.basel.int/meetings/cop/cop6/cop6_21e.pdf

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