

BIR Tyres & Rubber Committee: Science must be Prevail in Recycled Rubber Infill Debate

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In addition to Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs), the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) will continue to look into the possible health impacts of other substances contained in the granules and mulches derived from end-of-life tyres (ELTs).

The Netherlands has prepared a proposal to support a possible restriction to address the risks from eight PAHs found in granules and mulches used in synthetic turf pitches, or in loose forms at playgrounds and other sports facilities.

“There may also be further investigations into environmental effects too,” Fazilet Cinaralp, Secretary General of the European Tyre & Rubber Manufacturers’ Association told attendees at the BIR Tyres & Rubber Committee. “This is expected to lead to the publication of an intention to restrict other substances in ELTs later in 2019.”

Chairing the committee meeting for the final time, Barend ten Bruggencate of Netherlands based RecyBEM, agreed that “all our interest” is focused on what ECHA will say.

Latest statistics indicate that 75% of Europe's waste tyres destined for material recovery - equivalent to more than 1.4 million tonnes per annum - are channelled into granulation, for which end-use applications "remain a challenge", Cinaralp explained to delegates.

Owing to recent adverse media coverage, "many outlets for rubber infill have closed" and a significant number of municipalities are declining to use it, she added.

Despite an industry coalition to promote the use of rubber infill, the market in America has dipped by perhaps 30% over the last two to three years owing to negative media reports of safety concerns - even though some 100 studies have concluded that no such safety risk exists, commented Robin Wiener, President of the US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries ([ISRI](#)).

The results of a multi-agency US study into potential risks are expected in November this year and ISRI has called for "plain language" conclusions. The US Congress has also asked to see a copy of the final report prior to publication - evidence of "a recognition of the importance of this issue".

Wiener was joined by ISRI's Chair-Elect and tyre specialist Gary Champlin in underlining the need to "keep the focus on the science" rather than "letting emotion take over".

In response to the current outlook for granulate in Europe, Cinaralp insisted: "It is time to look for other markets." She identified asphalt rubber as the outlet "with the most potential" and one which has already proved itself in the USA.

"All the benefits of rubberised asphalt are known," she said, also pointing out ISRI has promoted the environmental advantages of rubberised asphalt for many years in the US.

The US Congress is currently talking of infrastructure reform and ISRI has been joining with industry to "push for incentives for asphalt rubber", she went on to say.