UK waste sector injuries fallen by 23 per cent

According to Health and Safety Executive (HSE) figures, the number of people injured whilst working in the United Kingdom waste sector has fallen by 23 per cent. The provisional „Health and Safety statistics 2012/13" found that there were a total of 2,864 injuries in the waste and recycling sector; 2,141 in the 'waste collection, treatment and disposal activities; materials recovery' sector (500 'non-fatal major injuries' and 1,632 'over-7 day injuries'), and 51 in the 'remediation activities'.

The European Plastics Industry: Moving on up again in 2014

Polymer demand growth in Europe for 2013 is expected to be static compared with 2012, according to Applied Market Information Ltd., which has just published its 2013 European Plastics Industry Report. AMI calculates that the market for thermoplastics in Europe is currently 36.5 million tonnes, a volume that is still nearly four million tonnes less than the peak it hit in 2007. By the last quarter of 2011 the recovery was beginning to run out of steam in the face of the looming Eurozone crisis.

China Heading Towards a Stainless Scrap "Bubble"

The rapid development of nickel pig iron (NPI) production in China had sharply reduced its scrap requirement.

Continuing growth in the country's internal and external scrap volumes now threatened to create a stainless scrap "bubble" over the coming years, sector specialist Heinz Pariser told the BIR Stainless Steel & Special Alloys Committee meeting in Warsaw on October 29. From a standing start around a decade ago, NPI already accounted for 57 per cent of the Chinese stainless steel industry's external raw material purchases while the scrap share had slumped from 52 to eleven per cent over the same period, according to the founder and head of Heinz H. Pariser Alloy Metals & Steel Market Research in Germany. Assuming low recycling ratios, China's stainless scrap reserve was duly expected to soar from less than 20 million tonnes in 2012 to 62.2 million tonnes by 2020 and to 164 million tonnes by 2030. This "huge" volume was "definitely a challenge for the stainless scrap industry," Pariser warned.

Earlier, he had termed China's preference for NPI "a major disaster for the scrap industry". China was also the point of focus for the meeting's guest speaker when reviewing world stainless steel output and demand trends. Pariser predicted that global stainless melting production would climb 5.9 per cent to around 37.9 million tonnes this year and a further 6.5 per cent next year to 40.37 million tonnes; however, output in China was expected to jump 13.8 per cent this year and 10.1 per cent in 2014 to 20.5 million tonnes, or more than half of the world total. For the same two years, EU production was deemed likely to fall by, respectively, 5.2 and 2.3 per cent while increases of 3.5 per cent for 2013 and 12.3 per cent for 2014 were envisaged in the USA.

A period of uncertainty

China was "overdoing it" in terms of stainless steel capacity expansions, according to Pariser, as increases were running ahead of demand and leading to growing global oversupply. Having voiced his belief that China's production capacity would exceed 30 million tonnes by 2015, he added: "There is a big overcapacity in stainless steel and a big decision needs to be made."

Earlier, Mark Sellier of OneSteel Recycling in China spoke of "a period of uncertainty" in summarising latest developments within the global stainless steel industry. The balance between scrap supply and demand was "moving towards tightness" in the USA where most small dealers were currently "low on stock". In Europe, meanwhile, stainless steel production had fallen – "but not dramatically" – and scrap values in relation to the LME had also headed lower of late. Stainless steel scrap demand was stable in India "but securitising sales to that market remains a concern," according to Sellier. As for Russia, there was some evidence to suggest that lower scrap export duties could be countered by the possible introduction of an environmental tax.
Sellier took charge of the Stainless Steel & Special Alloys Committee meeting in Warsaw pending the appointment of a permanent Chairman, possibly ahead of next June's BIR World Convention in Miami.


Photo: Marc Weigert


Photo: O. Kürth

End-Of-Waste Status "Essential" for Used Tyres

Tyres are listed by the EU authorities as a possible category of waste for which end-of-waste specifications and criteria should be developed, and efforts are continuing to be made to secure this status not only for tyre casings suitable for retreading but also for granulates, powder and chips obtained from the processing of the rubber fraction from tyres.

However, a concept end-of-waste declaration document has received disappointingly little attention to date, according to Kees van Oostenrijk, Director of the RecyBEM end-of-life tyre management body in the Netherlands. This was "a pity", he told the BIR Tyres Committee meeting in Warsaw on 29 October 2013, given that end-of-waste would be "an essential benefit" to the used tyre industry, such as through the reduction of administrative burdens. The guest speaker had earlier explained that end-of-life tyres ticked all the boxes for end-of-waste status in that: there was an existing demand; their use had been proved to entail no overall adverse environmental or human health impacts; and end-of-life-tyre-derived products were fit for use and met standards or specifications for trading.

BIR Tyres Committee Chairman Barend Ten Bruggencate of Vaco in the Netherlands also underlined the "challenge" of achieving end-of-waste status as well as the importance of close links with universities as a means of building scientific knowledge in crucial areas for tyre recycling such as devulcanisation.

The Committee meeting also featured guest presentations on tyre recycling in host country Poland and in Scandinavia too. According to Grzegorz Karnicki, Operations Director of leading Polish producer responsibility organisation CUO, domestic recovery of end-of-life tyres had leapt from 23,000 tonnes in 2002 to 185,000 tonnes a decade later. Some 54 per cent went for energy recovery while 29 per cent was converted into powders and granulate; products made of end-of-life tyre rubber accounted for a further 13 per cent and retreading for four per cent.

Hans van Mameren, who is responsible for end-of-life tyres at Swedish recycler Ragn-Sells, pointed out that Sweden, Norway and Finland had been achieving a hundred per cent tyre recycling rate since the turn of the Millennium. Material recycling currently took a 45 per cent share and energy recovery 55 per cent but the aim was to reverse these numbers by 2014, he told delegates. The guest speaker also predicted that, at some point in the future, producers of rubberised asphalt would be the biggest buyers of product derived from end-of-life tyres.