

How much do Americans recycle?

A new national survey finds that half of Americans say they recycle 75 per cent or more of their recyclable items. Eight per cent say they recycle all recyclables. The survey, conducted by global insights firm Kelton Global, finds that nearly two thirds of Americans say they recycle on a “regular basis”. While these figures sound like good news for the environment, they contrast with the national recycling rate of 34.5 per cent in 2012, as measured by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Increased security measures let thieves turn to easier targets

According to BusinessWaste, increased security measures for scrap metal mean that criminals turning their eye on what previously has been considered less lucrative refuse: paper and cardboard. “While the cameras and alarms are all trained on the scrap metal bin, thieves are finding easy money elsewhere,” says spokesman Mark Hall. “And most of the time it’s ready for them in easy-to-handle bales.” The recovery in the price of recycled cardboard means that it’s now economically viable to steal bales.

Photo: Marc Weigert



Studies Reveal Automotive Battery Trends and Closed-Loop Recycling

The European Association for Automotive and Industrial Batteries (Eurobat) announced the results of studies on trends in automotive batteries. These underline the particular need for the long term co-existence between all battery technologies for meeting future mobility demands.

A new report also revealed that closed loop collection and recycling for automotive lead-based batteries is a reality. Eurobat President Johann-Friedrich Dempwolff headlined the studies at a briefing in Brussels. The study on trends in automotive batteries highlighted the critical function of all battery technologies and that lead-based batteries, for instance, are essential in conventional combustion engine vehicles and in micro- and mild-hybrid applications. They also function as auxiliary batteries in hybrid and electric vehicles.

Dempwolff said the impact of the studies drive the association’s policy priorities: The threat of substitution of essential metals in lead, lithium, nickel and sodium technologies under EU legislation (REACH authorization

or End-of-life Vehicles Directive) would negatively impact Europe’s investment climate as well as hinder the EU’s sustainability and energy security agendas. Moreover, such a lack of policy coherence in Europe would result in a competitive disadvantage for European manufacturers in a globally very competitive market.

Executive Director Alfons Westgeest of Eurobat explained how batteries for energy storage applications are readily available and facilitating the integration of renewable energy in the electricity grid. Renewable energy is a growing source and while the intermittence of wind and solar is a problem, it can be overcome with energy solutions, such as storage batteries. In order to ensure energy security and supply in Europe the association specifically demands to

end the definition of storage as “regulated generating asset”, to unlock access to the grid, limit or even eliminate “curtailment” of renewable energy by power utilities, and to ensure that investment in storage will be incentivised. Westgeest stressed the importance of batteries in upcoming micro-grids and rural electrification.

Karsten Kurz, Chairman of Eurobat’s Committee for Environment, summarised the new report on the closed-loop for automotive lead-based batteries. Prepared by the international consulting group IHS, the report confirms that the collection and recycling rate for automotive lead-based batteries stands at 99 per cent and that the closed-loop for these batteries make it one of the most recycled products. The complete study under: www.eurobat.org

Landfill Bans Set to Help Recycling

Olivier François of Group Galloo, Chairman of the BIR’s International Environment Council (IEC), had two items of “good news” to share with delegates at the meeting in Paris.

“We can hope for good consequences for our work on recycling,” François commented. In what he described as “a convergence” of legislation, France introduced a new law on October 14 calling for a 50 per cent landfill reduction by 2025 while the EU has proposed the objective that “landfilling of all recyclable waste shall be prevented by 2025”.

But in the first of two presentations relating to the UN-EP Basel Convention, BIR’s Environmental & Technical Director Ross Bartley expressed concern at the different benchmarks that existed for Environmentally Sound Management (ESM) at the world level for industrialised countries and developing countries. “The bar is shifting depending on what wastes you are dealing with between countries and regions,” he told the meeting. It was also clear, he said, that close attention would need to be paid to whether the Basel Convention adhered to its original remit of solely hazardous wastes and wastes from households.

Real desire to move things forward

Eric Harris, Associate Counsel/Director of Government & International Affairs at the US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, focused his presentation on draft technical guidelines on transboundary movements of e-waste and used electrical and electronic equipment with particular regard to the distinction between waste and non-waste under the Basel Convention. Two options had been put forward: The first entailed a set of specific conditions under which non-functional used electrical and electronic equipment would normally not be considered waste; while under the second,

so-called “fall-back” option, parties would be able to define the conditions under which such non-functional equipment would not be considered waste, and should inform the Basel Convention’s Secretariat about any such conditions.

Having noted that parties had been invited to submit comments to the Secretariat by the end of February next year, Harris added: “There is now a real desire to move things forward.” The IEC meeting in Paris also dwelt on the issue of extended producer responsibility (EPR). As a “pillar” and “free asset” of EPR schemes, the recycling industries should be part of their governance, it was argued by the Executive Director of French recycling federation Federec, Alfred Rosales. He also reiterated his call for independent monitoring of company data to avoid confidentiality issues.

There were already some 400 EPR schemes across the OECD spectrum and their development would continue, Rosales contended. Of those that were already in operation, around 90 per cent were based either in Europe or the USA while some 35 per cent of the total related to waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE). Alicia García-Franco Zúñiga argued that positions of power were being “abused” through EPR schemes in Spain, notably in the cases of end-of-life tyres and WEEE. The Director General of the country’s recovery and recycling federation FER contended that take-back schemes were required “when the waste generators are dispersed”, but not when the generators were traceable and when there was a proper control of public authorities.

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