

PRESS RELEASE

Recent BIR World Recycling Convention & Exhibition in Shanghai (27-29 May 2013)

International Environment Council: Uncertain future for radioactivity Code of Conduct

Brussels, 5 June 2013

A draft Code of Conduct that reflects many of the recycling industry's long-held concerns over radioactivity in scrap has fallen just short of winning acceptance at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), it was reported at the BIR International Environment Council (IEC) meeting in Shanghai on May 28.

At an IAEA gathering in February this year, some 60 nations approved the draft "Code of Conduct on the Transboundary Movement of Radioactive Material Inadvertently Incorporated into Scrap Metal and Semi-finished Products of the Metal Recycling Industries". However, just one country's decision to stand against it has consigned the document to an uncertain future.

According to IEC guest speaker Dr Alvaro Rodríguez de Sanabria representing FER of Spain, this was still a valuable tool which underlined the importance of collaboration in response to the discovery of radioactive material in scrap. He also expressed the hope that the draft Code of Conduct would achieve international acceptance at some point in the relatively near future.

The Code recognises that, in most cases, radioactive material found at a metals recycling facility has been delivered by a third party without the consent or approval of the facility in question, and that the absence or loss of proper control has led to the inadvertent incorporation of radioactive material into scrap metal.

Research in Spain had revealed that, on average, a radioactive source was found every 1m tonnes of scrap, Dr Rodríguez de Sanabria also noted in his presentation to the IEC meeting, which was chaired by Olivier François of NV Galloometal.

In reviewing latest legislative developments, BIR Environmental & Technical Director Ross Bartley pointed out that three international Conventions - Basel (wastes), Rotterdam (hazardous chemicals/pesticides) and Stockholm (persistent organic pollutants) - had recently met together in Geneva. This was a sign, he said, of "increasing coherence between chemicals and waste laws" which would affect for

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example the recycling of certain plastics, including those coming from electronic scrap.

In connection with the Basel Convention's Partnership for Action on Computing Equipment (PACE) concerning the environmentally sound management, refurbishment, recycling and disposal of used and end-of-life computing equipment, Mr Bartley indicated that some companies were already required to comply with its guidelines as governments enshrined them in national legislation. "So we take these things seriously," he told delegates.

Also in Shanghai, Jin Jie from CIQ provided a comprehensive review of China's AQSIQ registration renewal and future new-application procedures, including answers to some of the most frequently-asked questions posed by foreign companies wishing to register to supply secondary raw materials to China. The speaker underlined the absolute necessity for applicants to be approved to an appropriate quality management standard.

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