



BIR

Bureau of International Recycling

BIR is the international trade association of the recycling industries. More than 50 countries are represented through their national trade associations and individual companies which are involved in recycling. BIR comprises four commodity divisions: iron and steel, non ferrous metals, paper and textiles, and has committees dealing with stainless steel and special alloys, plastics and rubber. BIR's primary goals are to promote recycling and recyclability, thereby conserving natural resources, protecting the environment and facilitating free trade of secondary raw materials.

PRESS RELEASE

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Commercial barriers hidden behind environmental arguments

‘We have been environmentalists since before the word was invented,’ declared **International Environment Council Chairman Alvaro Rodriguez Martinez** at the body’s London meeting. ‘We are defending the environment but there are a lot of examples of where commercial barriers are being hidden behind the environment.’

Fellow Spaniard **Luis Del Molino Garcia** of paper and board organisation **Reparcar** proposed that resources be channelled into an evaluation of the environmental benefits of paper recycling. The recycling industry deserved greater recognition but instead was coming under pressure to divulge sensitive business information, including its raw material sources. Welcoming the proposal, Mr Rodriguez Martinez gave an example of his own to underline the benefits of recycling, ie that making aluminium from scrap required only 10% of the energy used in primary production.

In his review of latest international developments, **BIR’s Environmental & Technical Director Ross Bartley** highlighted a decision that was currently going through the Basel Convention to encourage more countries to provide extra information on the non-hazardous substances that they wanted to import. Also approved during the week of the BIR convention were Technical Guidelines on the environmentally sound recycling/reclamation of metals and metal compounds. At EU level, meanwhile, a Council compromise had been reached in connection with the revision of Waste Shipment Regulations. BIR was ‘comfortable’ with this compromise which should be approved next year, he added.

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Reporting on activities within the **US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI)**, the **organisation's representative Bob Garino** related a recent board of directors' decision to initiate the formation of a coalition of industry associations to 'explore options and suggest recommendations concerning radioactive scrap'. ISRI was also continuing to commit resources to issues including mercury removal, PCBs and 'a certification programme that would set exacting guidelines for scrap processors with respect to quality, safety and environmental standards'.

In the first of two complementary **guest presentations**, **Andrew Slaney of UK refrigerator recycler M. Baker Recycling Ltd** said that more than 10 processors were now operating in his domestic market with a combined capacity of over 3 million units per annum. His own company was finding markets for more than 92% by weight of a refrigerator - a proportion which would rise to 98% if applications were secured for the polyurethane foam. Mr Slaney also explained that M. Baker Recycling had been awarded the contract to handle obsolete fridges throughout Ireland, as part of which the company was able to track all units using bar-code technology.

Noting that the supply of refrigerators containing ozone-depleting substances would dry up shortly, Mr Slaney said most plants would look to handle other waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE). **Pascal Leroy, Government Affairs Manager at appliance manufacturing body CECED**, predicted that CFC-containing fridges would become the minority in around three years from now. Given the low global warming potential of refrigerators containing hydrocarbons, he argued that it would be disproportionately expensive and would make no environmental sense to extract and treat these substances. 'There may even be increased global warming resulting from pre-treatment operations and transportation of the extracted hydrocarbon gases,' he added.

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