

PRESS RELEASE

Recent BIR World Recycling Convention & Exhibition in Hong Kong (22-24 May 2017)

Tyres & Rubber Committee:

Attack on crumb rubber “an industry-wide issue”

Brussels, 30 May 2017

Although more than 90 separate pieces of research have concluded no risks are attached to the use of crumb rubber in synthetic turf, the issue “is not going away” and will not do so until “a definitive study” has been published, according to Robin Wiener, President of the US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries.

Despite this impressive body of research, negative media reports surrounding crumb rubber use in artificial turf have prompted some US jurisdictions to delay purchasing decisions while 13 bills have emerged in the USA this year targeting this application. The “cloud of uncertainty” had led to a 30% decline in the crumb rubber market over recent years and also to job losses, Ms Wiener told the BIR Tyres & Rubber Committee meeting in Hong Kong on May 22.

She warned that this represented “an industry-wide issue affecting all recyclers, regardless of commodity” and that it was therefore essential to “work together, sharing information and strategies”. She pointed delegates in the direction of the RecycledRubberFacts.org microsite which carries information on “all the various studies out there that have demonstrated the safety of this material”.

Dutch public health and environment institute RIVM and the European chemicals agency ECHA have both insisted recently that the health risks associated with rubber granulate were “negligible”, it was also noted by BIR Tyres & Rubber Committee Chairman Barend Ten Bruggencate of Recybem in the Netherlands.

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He also highlighted statistics from the European Tyre and Rubber Manufacturers' Association indicating that 95% of the EU-28's used tyres underwent some form of treatment in 2015 - including material and energy recovery - whereas only 5% or 186,000 tonnes was landfilled.

In China, the most recent figures available suggest regenerated rubber production accounts for 36.5% of waste rubber utilisation while vulcanised rubber powder production and thermal cracking contribute a further 5% and 3.6%, respectively. Tyre retreading consumes 4% and has been "stagnant" in China over recent years, the Hong Kong meeting was informed by Qiang Yu, Executive Chairman of the China National Tyre Recycling Association and President of Tianjin Hi-tech Environmental Development Co. Ltd.

The speaker also noted that his company had paved more than 4100km of highway using tyre-derived crumb rubber modified bitumen.

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