

Environmental Challenges in the Coated Wire and Cable Industry

Focus Group
Friday, June 22, 2001
Quinsigamond Community College
9:00 – 12:00

Sponsored by: Toxics Use Reduction Institute at UMASS Lowell

Agenda:

- Welcome and Introductions (coffee and light breakfast provided)
- Background on Environmental Issues in the Wire and Cable Industry
- Speakers:
 - Liz Harriman – Massachusetts Toxics Use Reduction Institute @ UMASS Lowell
 - Additive Supplier – Invited
 - Dave Kiddoo, Alpha Gary
 - Customer Perspectives – Invited
- Facilitated Discussion on Research and Technology Diffusion Recommendations

Objective: To bring together representatives of companies throughout the wire and cable value chain to discuss research and technology options that will assist manufacturers in meeting increasingly stringent environmental, health and safety standards. The latter include the recently proposed EU Directive on the Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment (WEEE Directive), the pressure in the United States to eliminate lead in products, the growing pressures to phase-out PVC, and some halogenated flame-retardants.

Background: Shipments of U.S. wire and cable manufacturers of insulated products (excluding fiber-optic products) were nearly \$12 billion in 1996 and \$18 billion in 1999, with an average annual growth rate of 5%. There are roughly 150-200 wire and cable manufacturers in the United States, with more than 15 located in Massachusetts.

The growing movement in Europe to control the end-of-life disposal of electrical equipment and electronics has led to the proposed EU Directive on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment, which is still in a draft stage. The WEEE Directive covers 11 categories of equipment, including large and small household appliances, telecommunication equipment, and radio and television equipment. This directive further includes provisions for a phase-out of some heavy metals, including lead.

Such a step will significantly affect the manufacturers of wire and cable throughout the entire life-cycle (e.g., wire and cable coaters, compounders, extruders, additives and resins suppliers). Currently, the Massachusetts wire and cable industry uses almost 3 million pounds of lead as heat stabilizer for PVC cables and more than 2 million pounds of antimony, among other chemicals (according to 1999 TURA data). In order to both reduce toxics use and keep Massachusetts industry competitive, TURI has been deeply involved in research and development of “Lead-Free-Electronics”. The focus group is expected to provide some recommendations as part of the plan to further foster research, development and diffusion of alternatives to some of the toxic chemicals currently used in coated wire and cable that are both economical and environmentally sound.

About TURI: The Toxics Use Reduction Institute is a research and education organization located at UMASS Lowell.