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TBBPA Risk Assessment Concluded

In the context of the EU evaluation of priority chemical substances, a health and environment Risk Assessment has been conducted on TBBPA, a leading brominated flame retardant mainly used in printed circuit boards.

The UK recently finalised the environmental part of the TBBPA Risk Assessment. The Risk Assessment Report identified no risk for TBBPA when used as a reactive¹, such as in the epoxy resins of printed circuit boards.

Technical experts confirmed a risk for sediment and water at the production stage when TBBPA is used as an additive to ABS plastics. In order to manage these risks, EBFRIP is applying the Voluntary Emissions Control Action Programme (VECAP)². To date, 100% of TBBPA additive customers in Europe have signed up to the VECAP and have already started reducing their emissions.

It should be noted that the Risk Assessment Report also identified a risk if sludge containing TBBPA is applied to agricultural land. In practice, however, this does not happen as we understand that sludge from user sites is sent for incineration or to controlled landfills. The health part of the Risk Assessment was closed in 2005 and identified no risk.

The UK environmental authorities are drafting a strategy to reduce the risks identified for the above mentioned additive scenarios. This strategy will be discussed at EU level for the first time at the end of October.

In the context of the REACH legislation, TBBPA will be one of the first substances to go through the registration procedure due to its high production volume. All the necessary studies for REACH registration are already developed in the context of the EU risk assessment.

¹ TBBPA is used to comply with global fire safety requirements mainly as a reactive chemical in epoxy resins of printed circuit board laminates (such as FR4, CM-1 and CM-3) and as an additive to ABS plastics

² Established by the brominated flame retardant industry, VECAP was set up to manage, monitor and minimise industrial emissions of commercially available brominated flame retardants into the environment through partnership with the supply chain including Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). Developed for Deca-BDE it is now being applied to the main other high production volume brominated flame retardants, TBBPA and HBCD. For a copy of the second VECAP Annual Progress Report, click on: http://www.bsef.com/product_stew/