

MINI

FAQs

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The European Legislation on WEEE and RoHS

FAQs

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What is the WEEE Directive?

The Directive on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) aims to increase the recycling and recovery of WEEE through mechanical recycling, feedstock recycling and energy recovery. The Directive will require separation of most of E&E Equipment from unsorted waste in Europe. This E&E waste will then be collected, recycled and re-used under the financial responsibility of manufacturers.

Which are the collection, recovery and recycling targets of the WEEE Directive?

By 31 December 2006, the Directive requires to separate at least 4 kg of WEEE per inhabitant per year from usual waste streams.

Out of this collected WEEE, manufacturers of "IT & Telecommunication equipment" (computers, fax machine, telephones, copiers, printers) and "consumer equipment" (TVs, radios) will have, by 31 December 2006, to:

- recover (i.e. recycling plus energy recovery) a minimum of 75% by an average weight per appliance
- re-use and recycle a minimum of 65% of components, materials and substances by average weight per appliance.

What is the impact of the WEEE Directive for BFRs?

The Directive's requirement to increase mechanical recycling is an advantage for plastics containing BFRs as they offer high level of stability during the recycling process.

Annex II of the WEEE Directive requires "selective treatment of plastics containing BFRs". BSEF believes that this requirement can be fulfilled when such plastic waste is treated (recovered, recycled, thermally disposed) together with other plastic waste.

Indeed, several studies demonstrate that the most commonly used plastics containing BFRs in electrical and electronic equipment are fully compatible with integrated waste management systems such as

feedstock and mechanical recycling and energy recovery. Removal before treatment of plastics containing BFRs from other plastic wastes has no added benefit in terms of environment or health protection.

A EU working group has drafted a guidance document to advise Member States on how to deal with the implementation of Annex II of the WEEE Directive as regards selective treatment of certain wastes and components. These guidelines are expected to be in place in 2006.

When do the Recycling Requirements for WEEE start in Europe ?

European Member States have to set up E&E waste collection facilities by 13 August 2005. Individual Member States are already starting to put their legislative frameworks in place.

E&E manufacturers or recyclers acting on their behalf, will have to reach recovery and recycling targets of the collected E&E waste (see details on page 3) by 31 December 2006. This requires action now in order to ensure that future WEEE meets the new requirements for recyclability and recoverability by the time of the 2006 deadline.

What is the RoHS Directive ?

RoHS stands for Restriction of certain Hazardous Substances in electrical and electronic equipment.

This European Directive aims to phase-out by 1 July 2006 the use of some substances deemed to be hazardous in the electrical and electronic equipment (E&E).

Which BFRs will be banned in the RoHS Directive ?

The EU Directive to restrict hazardous substances from E&E, will ban PBBs, Penta-BDE, and Octa-BDE, from the production of new E&E equipment from 1 July 2006. The RoHS Directive reflects existing industry practice as well as already implemented European legislation. Indeed, industry voluntarily ceased production of PBBs in 2000. Also, Penta-BDE and Octa-BDE are banned for use in the European Union since August 2004.

Deca-BDE exempted

Deca-BDE was exempted from the RoHS Directive on 15 October 2005. This Decision was taken by the European Commission on the basis of the conclusions of a European Union 10-year environmental and human health risk assessment, and of a voluntary emissions reduction programme established by Deca-BDE manufacturing and user industries (see the European Commission website: http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2005/l_271/l_27120051015en00480050.pdf).

The European Commission also took into consideration the contributions from a stakeholder consultation in July 2004, where a significant majority of responses (85%) were in favour of exempting Deca-BDE (please see http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/waste/consultation_2002_95_ec.htm).

In January 2006 the European Parliament and Denmark both launched legal procedures against the European Commission regarding the exemption of Deca-BDE from the RoHS Directive. In advance of any European Court of Justice ruling, the European Commission Decision to exempt Deca-BDE from the RoHS Directive remains entirely valid and must be implemented since 15 October 2005.

Are other BFRs going to be banned in E&E in Europe ?

No. In fact the RoHS Directive gives producers a clear guarantee that no individual EU Member State will be able to introduce separate bans or restrictions on any other substance than those specified in the RoHS Directive.

As per the rest of EU legislation, a periodic review of the RoHS Directive will take place in upcoming years. Also, as with all exemptions listed in the annex to the RoHS Directive, there will be a review of the Deca-BDE exemption, to be undertaken before 2010.

When does the ban come into force ?

The Directive proposal on RoHS phasing-out PBBs, Penta-BDE and Octa-BDE from the production of new E&E applications, will start on 1st July 2006.

Individual EU Member States will not be able to adopt earlier bans nor will they be allowed to adopt isolated bans of other substances.

However, another EU Directive banned the flame retardants, Penta-BDE and Octa-BDE, in all products from the European market on 15 August 2004.

For more information about the fire safety benefits of brominated flame retardants, additional information on environmental issues and to find out more about bromine and its applications, please visit our website.



The BSEF website provides extensive scientific information on bromine and brominated products. BSEF's presence in the EU, the US and Asia-Pacific ensures that up-to-date relevant information can be made quickly available through this site (e.g. the latest developments on EU proposals such as those on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment).

Useful websites for further information

Fire Safety

<http://www.bfrl.nist.gov/fris/>

<http://www.acfse.org>

Flame Retardant Industry

<http://www.ebfrip.org>

<http://www.cefic-efra.org>

<http://www.albemarle.com>

<http://www.icl-ip.com>

<http://www.chemtura.com>

<http://www.tosoh.com>

For further information on Brominated Flame Retardants
www.bsef.com

BSEF is the international organisation of the bromine chemical industry, whose remit is to inform stakeholders and commission science on brominated chemicals such as flame retardants.



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