

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

Greening Consumer Electronics

- from Hazardous Material to Sustainable Solutions

Leading companies within the electronics sector sent a strong message to EU regulators at a conference in the context of the revision of the RoHS and WEEE Directives: Moving away from Brominated Flame Retardants and PVC is possible, feasible and is already happening!

18 November 2009, European Parliament, Brussels

Hosted by Jill Evans, Member of the European Parliament and Rapporteur on the Revision of RoHS

The same week as MEP Jill Evans published her report on the revision of the EU RoHS Directive (Restriction of Hazardous Substances in electrical and electronic equipment), ChemSec, the International Chemical Secretariat, together with Jill Evans, arranged a conference in the European Parliament. The conference highlighted the achievements of leading electronics companies phasing out hazardous substances ahead of legislation.

The conference gathered around 100 representatives from the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission, as well as representatives of the electronics sector, trade associations and public interest organisations.

ANDY BAYNES, APPLE INC.

Introducing the business-perspective on halogens in electrics, Apple described how the company today is virtually BFR and PVC-free. Today Apple restricts nearly all uses of brominated and chlorinated compounds, at the elemental level, from its products. Apple products like the iPod shuffle, nano, and iPhone are free of BFRs PVC. Apple's iMac and Macbook products are free of all BFRs and PVC with the exception of PVC use in external wires.

Apple: Most of our products are today free from brominated flame retardants, PVC and phtalates.

Apple also underlined the importance of an elemental approach in verification of bromine and chlorine restrictions, rather than a compound by compound approach, arguing that the compound approach is not only more complex and time-consuming, but also much more costly.

Apple: Two years after starting to produce BFR and PVC-free products, the cost parity is at the same level as before making this transition.

MATS PELLBÄCK-SCHARP, SONY ERICSSON MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS

Sony Ericsson shipped their first BFR-free phone in 2002, and the whole Sony Ericsson portfolio has been bromine-free since 2006. All Sony Ericsson products will be totally PVC-free by the end of 2009.

Sony Ericsson: The whole industry of mobile phones is going bromine and PVC-free, it is already happening.

Sony Ericsson: When volumes go up it will be cheaper for companies to buy BFR-free components than to buy components relying on brominated flame retardants. The RoHS implementation has proved that regulation drive development and push industry to phase out unwanted substances.

ARIELA VERBOORD, DSM ENGINEERING PLASTICS

DSM Engineering Plastics is a leading material supplier delivering plastic compounds including halogen free solutions for wires, cables and connectors.

DSM: We have developed a portfolio of halogen-free solutions for wires, cables and connectors.

Ms. Verboord explained how, by working with partners throughout the complete value-chain, DSM now can deliver high performance halogen-free plastics. In its portfolio, DSM produces Stanyl Fortii for connectors and Arnitel XG for cables, both entirely bromine and chlorine free and RoHS compliant

PROF. ÅKE BERGMAN, HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CHEMISTRY, STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY

Focusing on the human health and environmental implications of bromine and chlorine in electronics, Prof. Bergman described scientific evidence showing that new BFRs are found in bio-monitoring, in mammals as well as humans, all over the world. In addition, the similar structures of individual substances within the group indicate similar hazardous properties. Accordingly, tackling them one by one is highly in-efficient.

Prof. Åke Bergman: Many Brominated and Chlorinated Flame Retardants are highly persistent and bio-accumulative. Actions on these chemicals should have been taken long time ago, hopefully steps will now be taken in the right direction.

GRACE O'MALLEY, INEMI

Grace O'Malley, Manager of European Operations at iNEMI, the International Electronics Manufacturing Initiative, with companies such as Dell, Intel, HP, Huawei and Cisco as members, described the work of these companies phasing out PVC and Halogenated Flame Retardants. In her presentation, Industry Collaboration Driving Proactive Environmental Improvements, Ms. O'Malley presented iNEMI's halogen-free projects, explaining how a concerted effort is needed across the industry and supply chain on driving trade-offs across design, production, and materials to derive solutions. iNEMI is targeting desktop and laptop new product intercepts in 2012, and servers being targeted for 2014.

ALEXANDRA MCPHERSON, PROJECT DIRECTOR, CLEAN PRODUCTION ACTION

Alexandra McPherson, Project Director of US-based Clean Production Action, summarized with the final presentation of the conference: Many leading manufacturers and suppliers within the electronics sector, such as Apple, Sony Ericsson, Dell, HP and Sony are already producing products free from PVC and Brominated and Chlorinated Flame Retardants.

CPA: Companies offering BFR, CFR and PVC-free mobile phones make up over 50 percent of the western European market share (sales), and those offering BFR, CFR and PVC-free computers will likely enjoy almost 50 percent market share within two years.

The supply chain is ready to scale up as soon as demand increases. But they need predictability so that they can plan the transition and bring down their costs, and that is one important aspect of what RoHS can contribute with. said Alexandra McPherson.

JILL EVANS, MEMBER OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Jill Evans described the problems of an ever-growing global stream of electronic waste, and how RoHS presents a unique tool to green the e-industry. Restrictions of hazardous material is not preventing the development of new products, but the opposite: products have been redesigned to comply with RoHS, and many companies are now already going beyond that to phase out the use of halogenated compounds.

MEP Jill Evans: I do not believe this is the time to stand still; this revision is an important opportunity to strengthen the RoHS Directive and the companies are already ahead of us.

The recast of RoHS thus presents EU-legislators with an important opportunity to take progress a step further. MEP Jill Evans encouraged her fellow EU-legislators to seize the momentum that these and other companies have created by developing halogen-free products.

**For more information, please visit:
www.chemsec.org/rohs/conference**