

RECYCLING COMMUNICATIONS PRODUCTS: TOP MARKS FOR COPPER

As the best electrical conductor among all non-precious metals, copper is one of the key materials in modern communications technology, including computers, mobile telephones and ADSL connections. 100% recyclable, without any loss of quality or performance, copper is a vital contributor to sustainable development and fully supports the European Directive, which comes into force in Member States on August 13th 2004, on the recovery and recycling of waste from electrical and electronic equipment.

As of this date, Member States are required to have transposed into national law the European Directive of February 13th 2003 (WEEE) related to waste from electrical and electronic equipment.^(*) Given the significant increase for this type of waste, the European Union requires Member States to implement rules organising the collection and sorting of these equipment at their end of life. Manufacturers of electronic equipment are thus required to fund their collection and recycling by 2006. The recovery rate of telecommunications and information technology equipment must reach 75%, with 65% for reuse and recycling. For copper, whose recycling properties are known since the Bronze Age, industry operates a highly advanced infrastructure capable of melting down practically 100% of copper scrap. In 2002, 41.3% of European copper demand was met through recycling.

Alain HELINCK, Director for Quality and Customer Satisfaction at Fujitsu Siemens Computers, states: "Our products contain about 3% copper by weight, mainly in cables and printed circuit boards". At the end of the product's life, Fujitsu Siemens Computers take back from their customers their old equipment and recycle them in a specific factory based in Paderborn, Germany. "Once we have exhausted all possibilities of reuse, the remaining elements are dismantled and the raw materials, such as copper, are collected. For example, the old cables are cut up and ground down, the waste being separated into copper and insulation." The copper is then reintegrated into the normal copper production cycle and can be reused in exactly the same way as newly mined copper. As a consequence, "nearly 100% of the copper contained in the used equipment from Fujitsu Siemens Computers is recovered and recycled".

Because of copper's intrinsic outstanding electrical conductivity, no electrical appliance can operate without it. Printed circuit boards used in computers by Fujitsu Siemens contain around 10% copper. A mobile telephone contains on average 15 grams of copper and copper based alloys. This accounts for 14% of its weight, and up to 19% if you include the battery and charger cords. Every mobile communications relay station uses 250 kg of copper and ADSL technology, for high speed internet connections, is an innovation largely based on the improved use of the essential properties of the copper wiring in a standard telephone line.

About the European Copper Institute:

The European Copper Institute is a joint venture between the world's mining companies (represented by the International Copper Association, Ltd.) and the leading European fabricators. Its mission is to promote copper's benefits to modern society across Europe through its Brussels office and its network of eleven Copper Development Associations.

www.eurocopper.org

** With the exception of Greece, Ireland, Cyprus, Malta and Poland, all of which received a 24-month extension to the deadline.*

Further Information:

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