



Executive Summary

“Green Electronics” & Innovative Flame Retardants

Brussels, 24 June 2009

Background:

In March 2009, Cefic established a new sector group representing halogen-free flame retardants: pinfa¹. On 24th June 2009, pinfa organised its first bridge-building workshop. pinfa's aim is to offer a point of contact for information on alternative flame retardant technologies. Its members seek dialogue with stakeholders along the supply chain to learn about the market and regulatory requirements. This first workshop represented a significant step in that direction.

Over 50 participants came from Europe, Canada, Japan and the US. Representatives from international regulators (European Commission, US Environmental Protection Agency, and Environment Canada), national research institutes and the entire supply chain (manufacturers, downstream users, retailers and big brand names) all contributed to the success of this dynamic event.

Objective:

The objective of the workshop was to begin a constructive network where manufacturers of alternative flame retardant technologies can interact with direct users along the supply chain – right down to the retailer/brand owner, as well as other stakeholders such as regulators and research institutions – in order to understand their drivers, needs, and the technologies they seek.

Content:

During the day, participants heard challenging presentations and engaged in constructive discussions over difficult issues such as substitution, how industry can move forward to benign products, difficulties embedded in *true* life cycle analysis and issues around the term “green technologies”.

Morning discussions centered on regulations: DG Enterprise presented RoHS and REACH; DG Environment shared information on ecolabels and Clean Production Action discussed California's Green Chemistry Initiative. The focus then turned to how brand-holders deal with market pressures and substitution, with presentations from Nokia and Hewlett-Packard, while PlasticsEurope gave a “middle-man's” view. One of the pinfa founders, Clariant, moderated

¹ Phosphorous, Inorganic & Nitrogen Flame Retardants Association – founded in March 2009



discussions wrapping up the morning: the debate focused on the challenges around scientific risk versus business risk, the different perspectives of manufacturers (often focused on scientific risk) compared with retailers (proactive in avoiding reputational risk); issues of “life cycle thinking” and the difficulties surrounding the term “green technologies”. The animated discussions helped clarify mutual understanding and insight into the issues facing participants, all of whom work directly with flame retardants, but coming from different perspectives.

The afternoon session focused on substance evaluation and alternatives, with a presentation from the German institute of materials research on recent developments in fire safety requirements for electronics; the Karlsruhe Research Centre spoke about environmental profiles of alternatives, the US EPA discussed its environment project on printed circuit boards, the VU University of Amsterdam shared details about an EU research project on life cycle assessment of environmentally compatible flame retardants and a cables manufacturer, AlphaGary, talked about EU trends on flame retardancy in cables. Cefic’s Build Trust Program representative moderated the discussion and brain storm that wrapped up the workshop: questions centered on issues such as consumer information, the negative reputation of flame retardants and the pros, cons and feasibility of establishing a harmonized substance list for flame retardants similar to that produced by the automotive industry². The moderated brainstorm discussion centered on three questions:

1. What were the main issues raised today?
2. How should industry approach the future of flame retardancy?
3. How can supply-chain communication be improved?

Conclusions:

This first pinfa workshop made a big step towards fostering mutual understanding between the supply chain on the different needs and drivers of each group and went a long way towards clarifying the key issues for flame retardants, how to improve communication throughout the supply chain and how to approach the future of flame retardancy. The inclusion of regulators from Europe, the US and Canada as well as important research institutions brought a better comprehension of trends and future directions in the regulatory management of flame retardants.

Next Steps:

The results of the workshop and outcomes of the brainstorm session will be assessed and carefully considered by the pinfa members. All workshop participants will be contacted in Q4 of this year with a communication about next steps. These could, for example include broadening the network to other stakeholders.

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² GADSL – Global Automotive Declarable Substance List