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Press Relations Officer: Martin Ittershagen
PR-staff: Anke Döpke, Dieter Leutert,
Fotini Mavromati, Theresa Pfeifer, Martin Stallmann
Address: Postfach 1406, 06813 Dessau-Roßlau
Telephone: +49 340/21 03-2122, -2827, -2250, -2318, -3927, -2507
E-Mail: pressestelle@uba.de
Internet: www.umweltbundesamt.de



REACH and plastics recycling Requirements and recommendations for market stakeholder action

The entry-into-force of the European Chemicals Regulation REACH has brought extensive obligations upon the private sector as concerns the production, import and processing of chemicals. Due to considerable uncertainty about the consequences of REACH on plastics recycling, several plastics industry associations and businesses, along with the Federal Environment Agency (UBA), have come to an agreement within the framework of the Environmental Research Plan in a project known as 'REACH and plastics recycling'.

The project's objective is to develop a manual for the market stakeholders in plastics recycling which spotlights the core requirements of REACH and lends a helping hand in implementation of the new chemicals regulation. Scheduled date of completion is Autumn 2009. The following main features are anticipated:

Registration obligations

The existing registration obligations by and large pose no problem for recycling companies on account of the recycling privilege as per Article 2(7)(d) REACH and a pragmatic interpretation of substance identification with regard to impurities.

Reporting obligations

In accordance with REACH, recyclers must establish a profile of hazardous properties for their recycled materials and provide this information to their customers. A variety of case studies will illustrate pragmatic steps to meeting classification and labelling obligations and the duty to educate customers, e.g. by means of safety data sheets. The ongoing debate about how to tackle issues regarding the composition of wastes, e.g. unknown impurities, and the creation of documentation for customers will feature prominently here.

These obligations have in fact been in effect for a long time, independently of REACH regulations.

The final report will include references to activities within Europe's plastics industry in concert with the introduction of REACH.

The Ökopol Institute for Environmental Strategies is handling the project. A presentation for those in the expert community is scheduled upon its conclusion.

For more information about REACH see: <http://www.reach-info.de>.

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