

## **Response to ECHA public consultation on a proposed restriction of lead and its compounds in consumer articles**

### **Swedish proposal**

We note with interest the start of the public consultation by ECHA on a proposal by Sweden recommending a restriction on the placing on the market or use of lead and its compounds in articles (or individual parts of articles), which are supplied to the general public and can be placed in the mouth by children, if the concentration of lead (expressed as metal) in the article is equal or greater than 0.05% by weight.

The International Lead Association is committed to the safe and sustainable use of lead and, for many years, the Association has sponsored independent research into the effects of lead on health and the environment.

### **ILA concerns**

The hazardous properties of lead mean that it should be manufactured and used responsibly. ILA therefore supports the principle behind the Swedish proposal to limit the risk of exposure to children from consumer articles that can be sucked or chewed.

However, ILA believes that regulation must be used in proportion to the likely risks and must be capable of being implemented by Industry and the enforcement authorities. ILA therefore has the following concerns that we express in the interest of developing an effective regulation:

- The scope of the proposal is too wide and ambiguous, making it difficult to comply with and enforce- in many cases the source of lead in consumer articles is unknown.
- Lead is found as a trace impurity in many materials, recycled or otherwise, that could be used to manufacture consumer articles - for example, several "lead-free" alloys contain residual lead at concentrations between 0.1-1%. We are concerned that this has not been adequately considered in Sweden's proposal and would like to specifically highlight the potential implications for the EU's recycling industry resulting from this oversight.
- There is a great deal of uncertainty on the socio-economic benefits of this restriction. This is because there is a very limited data presented on which to base estimates on the amount of

lead found in consumer articles and the likely number of consumer articles containing lead. Moreover, we believe the proposal over-estimates the frequency and length of time children spend chewing and sucking articles.

- A number of important exemptions, such as use of lead in crystal glass, were made under the jewellery restriction passed in 2012. The situation concerning risk and availability of alternatives has not changed and we are therefore surprised that Sweden is proposing that these exemptions are not included in this latest restriction proposal

We hope that comments received during the public consultation will be carefully considered during the planned review by the ECHA Risk Assessment and Socio-Economic Analysis Committees and that this process will ensure a more balanced regulation that is both workable and minimises unintended impacts on industry, whilst achieving its intended goal of protecting the health of children.

### **April 2013**

#### **Notes to Editor:**

Lead in consumer articles represents less than 1% of the lead placed on the market, 80% of modern lead usage is in the production of batteries of which more than 95% are recycled. Other significant applications include rolled or extruded products that are used on buildings, for radiation protection and in cable sheathing. These do not represent uses that can result in exposure to children and in many cases play an important role in protecting health and in helping deliver sustainable technologies to meet carbon emission targets.

Lead acid batteries will play a significant role in helping the EU deliver on its 2020 strategy for increasing resource efficiency. Battery technologies have made considerable contributions to the further electrification of the drive train of vehicles, from conventional internal combustion engines (ICE) to start & stop systems, plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (HEV) and full electric vehicles (EV). In addition to this, batteries already make an important contribution to the integration of renewable energy in existing grids and are expected to play a key role in the development of smart grids.

### **April 2013**

#### **Notes to editors**

#### **About the ILA**

The International Lead Association is a membership body that supports companies involved in the mining, smelting, refining and recycling of lead. The ILA represents the producers of about 3 million tonnes of lead and almost two thirds of lead production in the western world.

With offices in the UK and USA the ILA provides a range of technical, scientific and communications support and is focused on all aspects of the industry's safe production, use and recycling of lead and helps fund bodies such as the International Lead Management Center and the International Lead Zinc Research Organization. Visit [www.ila-lead.org](http://www.ila-lead.org)

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