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Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods

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Informal Document to TRANS/WP.15/AC.1/2004/25 (Used lithium batteries)

Transmitted by the European Battery Recycling Association (EBRA)

The Council directive on batteries and accumulators and spent batteries and accumulators COM(2003)723 – C5-0563/2003-2003/0282(COD)) requires the recycling of all types of spent batteries and accumulators.
Member states are requested to implement legislation to this effect. This legislation includes the obligation for users of batteries, as well domestic users in a domestic environment, as industrial and professional users in an industrial environment, to not dispose of the batteries by the communal of industrial waste systems, but to collect spent batteries separately for recycling.

The spent batteries that are being collected under this legislation are classified by application environment into two main classes:

Consumer types of batteries, collected from domestic sources as part of the household waste

Industrial types of batteries, collected from industrial sources as part of the industrial waste.

Consumer batteries are mainly used in the domestic environment as user replaceable batteries for domestic appliances as torches, walkmans and camera's. (Refer to the well known penlite ((L)R6, AA-types of batteries, and the baby (L)R14, C-types and Mono (L)R20, D-types, the 9 Volt blocks 6F22, BR and CR-types for camera's, and a multitude of rechargeable battery packs for mobile communication).

These spent consumer batteries are not subject to ADR Special provisions.

Industrial batteries are used in the professional and industrial environments. Most of these types include the large types of batteries as included classified under ADR as for example

UN 2794 Batteries, wet, filled with acid, electric storage
UN 2795 Batteries, wet, filled with alkali, electric storage
UN 3090 Lithium batteries

Applications for these batteries range from vehicle SLI-batteries to deep sea sensors and emergency power batteries for telecom exchanges and hospitals.

Many of these types are portable batteries, mounted into equipment for mobile operation or back-up power. Also military special batteries are in this class of industrial batteries, as are out of date stocks or production rejects.

Each Member state is implementing collection systems to ensure compliance to the collection rate requirements of the Council Directive. For the Consumer types of batteries, which are collected from domestic origin, collection point are made available at a large variety of public places so as to increase the collection rates. The collection points include communal domestic waste collection sites, special institutional collection sites at schools, camping and recreation sites, shops and supermarkets (which are also selling the (replacement) batteries).

Industrial types of batteries are used in Industrial environments, by Government offices and institutions, especially the Defense Departments. Spent industrial batteries are collected as Industrial waste by specialized and authorized Waste Collecting Companies, in the case of batteries mainly specialized and authorized Industrial Battery Collecting Companies. The packaging and carriage of most of these types of batteries being regulated under ADR provisions. (Example UN 2794 Lead acid batteries, UN 2795 Nickel Cadmium batteries, UN 3090 Lithium batteries).

It will be clear from the above that the carriage of the consumer types of spent batteries from domestic environments is totally different from the carriage of the Industrial batteries. The present-day collecting systems, designed for maximum retrieval rate, are therefore not adapted to the requirements of class 9 dangerous articles.

However, since a number of years a specific class of Consumer type of Lithium batteries (the BR and CR-types as specified in the International Standard IEC 60086), and also small rechargeable Lithium-Ion and Lithium-Polymer types of batteries) are an integral part of the class of Consumer types of batteries.
As ADR does not discriminate between Consumer types of Lithium Batteries and Industrial types of Lithium Batteries, also these Consumer types of Lithium Batteries are classified as dangerous articles.

It is in the context of this situation that EBRA is drawing the attention of the competent authorities of the States Parties to ADR/RID to the problem which is created by the ADR Provisions 636, et al, and the packing instruction P903b, for the carriage of spent consumer types of batteries from consumer battery collection sites.

These provisions classify any mixture of Consumer batteries collected from household disposal as dangerous articles class 9, when a (whatever small number) of Lithium batteries (of whatever type or class) is present.

It is in the context of the above described situation that EBRA has submitted the Document TRANS/WP.15/AC/1/2004/25: Comments on provisions for the transport of lithium cells and batteries UN 3090.

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