

Second testing program confirms: REACH compliance tests continue to give failing grades to tyre imports

ETRMA CONCERNED ABOUT ENFORCEMENT OF EUROPEAN LEGISLATION

Brussels, October 17 2011. The ETRMA (European Tyre and Rubber Manufacturers' Association) today announced the results of its second round¹ of tyre testing. Under the EU's REACH Regulation², high-PAH oils are banned from use in production of all tyres aimed for motor vehicles and are produced after January 1st, 2010 for sale on the EU market. Despite the publicity given to ETRMA's first round of tests, some 10% of tested tyres, all of which are imports, were again found to be non-compliant.

ETRMA's second testing campaign was carried out between April and September 2011 on a sample of 94 tyres available for sale to EU consumers in several of the largest national tyre markets. These tyres were all produced in late 2010 and 2011 in 50 factories located in 11 countries, and are being sold in the EU under 51 brand names (these include 31 brands not tested in the first round). 10% of the 94 sampled tyres are non-compliant, containing PAH levels prohibited by REACH and therefore being sold illegally on the EU market. Some of the non-compliant tyres are from brands which had non-compliant tyres in the first round. In addition, one factory has been shown to be systematically non-compliant: 5 of its tyres under 4 different brand names, including both passenger car and truck tyres, were tested and each of these tyres exceeds the allowed PAH limit.

Overall, the second test program covered truck, passenger summer and winter, motorcycle and agricultural tyre types. As in the first round of testing, all tyres in the sample group were purchased from available stocks at consumer retail outlets in major EU tyre markets (Germany, UK, Italy, etc.). Initial testing was carried out by ETRMA members. Any tyre that presented abnormal PAH results was then sent to a certified independent laboratory and tested according to the standard defined in REACH (ISO 21461). Only those tyres found to be non-compliant by these independent laboratories are reported here. The testing procedure and test results are fully and carefully documented.

"The results as well as the full testing reports have been delivered to EU and national authorities. Another 10% still non-compliant on the market means simply that there are manufacturers and importers who do not care about European legislation", states Dr Gori, President of ETRMA.

The presence of these illegal tyres on the European market raises major concerns about the enforcement of European legislation aimed to enhance the safety of tyres and of other products. "ETRMA is concerned that European surveillance efforts have not been sufficient to prevent these tyres from entering the European market and have effectively made it possible for European importers to continue selling illegal tyres," further adds Mrs Fazilet Cinaralp, Secretary General of ETRMA. "This is also likely to compromise the effectiveness of upcoming legislation such as the tyre labelling legislation that will come into effect in 2012. Non-adherence to the tyre labelling legislation could very well result in consumers being misled into buying inferior tyres with inferior performance characteristics."

President Gori concludes: "The ETRMA and its members have endorsed the full range of EU regulations governing the tyre industry; regulations which have demanded significant investments for compliance by our members. We therefore request urgent attention be given to a clear, coherent and coordinated market surveillance program that ensures a level playing field for all tyre producers. Legislation without effective follow-up and enforcement is damaging".

¹ Results of the first round of testing were announced by ETRMA in March 2011; see <http://www.etrma.org/pdf/20110301%20-%20EN%20 ETRMA Press%20release.pdf>

² EU Regulation 1907/2006 (REACH), Annex XVII, entry 50.

About ETRMA

The current ETRMA tyre corporate members are: Apollo Vredestein, Bridgestone Europe, Cooper Tires, Continental, Goodyear Dunlop Tires Europe, Hankook, Marangoni, Michelin, Mitas, Nokian Tyres, Pirelli and Trelleborg Wheel Systems. The Technical Rubber Producers are represented through national associations in Belgium (federplast.be), Finland (rmaf), France (sncp), Germany (wdk), Italy (fgp), the Netherlands (nvr) and Spain (consorcio). The industry provides direct employment for more than 360,000 persons in the EU and supports another 800,000 jobs in related sectors. ETRMA members' turnover is estimated at €50b annually, of which up to 5% is invested in R&D.

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Notes to the editor:

What does PAH stand for?

Poly-Aromatic-Hydrocarbons (PAHs): a group of over 100 chemical substances of poly-aromatic structure, that are widely found throughout the environment and formed by both natural and industrial processes. Eight PAHs have been identified as carcinogenic and their presence in extender oils for tyre production is expressly restricted under the EU REACH Regulation.

What are extender oils and why are they used in tyres?

Extender oils used in tyre industry are derived from refining in the petrochemical industry. Their function is to facilitate the processing of the rubber compounds from which tyres are made. Extender oils are also an essential component in the technical performance of the tyre, in particular for its road adherence (or grip) and wear properties, and ensure that tyres wear out more slowly. They therefore contribute directly to the quality of the tyre and ultimately driver safety. Following the precautionary principle of the European Union, PAH-rich oils that were previously used were banned. The required switch from high-PAH extender oils to safer, low-PAH oils required significant R&D, factory upgrading and the reformulation of the various rubber mixes in the tyre in order to maintain the crucial adherence and wear properties of the tyre.