



**This bulletin is intended to confirm provincial regulatory requirements that may apply with respect to the processing of copper wire in Saskatchewan.**

## ***Environmental Protection Bulletin***

### ***Copper Wire Recycling***

#### ***General:***

To extract and recycle copper materials from electrical wiring, recyclers or processors must remove the insulation. When this is done by low temperature burning, many environmental contaminants are released to the atmosphere and surrounding soils. These contaminants may include a variety of types of toxic substances including dioxins, furans, polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons, particulate matter, heavy metals (such as lead, arsenic, selenium and cadmium) and other pollutants. These pollutants may be carried significant distances from a site by wind or water action. Elevated concentrations of these pollutants are harmful to both human health and the environment. Sites where copper wire is burned or subsequently stored may become contaminated, leading to potentially costly clean up measures.

It is the position of Saskatchewan Environment that removal of insulation from copper wire must only be done by physical means rather than by burning. This position concurs with that of the recycling industry's parent organization, the Canadian Association of Recycling Industries (CARI).

Both the industry and the department share the objectives of having safe workplaces and undertaking economically practical business practices which protect public safety and enhance environmental stewardship. Industry in Saskatchewan is already taking action to curtail the acceptance of copper wire processed by burning. The wire has a distinct appearance and is easy to identify. This action should assist in controlling the burning of copper wire.

If you have any questions about the recycling of copper wire or provincial requirements for copper recycling or processing, please contact:

Wes Kotyk  
Manager, Industrial Potash Coal & Spills Unit  
Saskatchewan Environment  
112 Research Drive  
SASKATOON SK S7K 2H6  
FAX: (306) 933-8442  
Phone: (306) 933-6542  
E-mail: [wkotyk@serm.gov.sk.ca](mailto:wkotyk@serm.gov.sk.ca)

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## ***Applicable Legislation:***

- Burning of plastic in an open fire is expressly prohibited under section 11(3)(d) of *The Clean Air Regulations*. Although this prohibition is subject to a valid and subsisting permit to operate an industrial source, incinerator or fuel burning equipment, Saskatchewan Environment, generally speaking, will not issue such a permit except in rare and highly regulated circumstances. This is because of the known health and environmental hazards associated with the incomplete combustion of plastics.
- If Saskatchewan Environment becomes aware of recycling operations being operated in contravention of provincial regulatory requirements, recyclers may be subject to enforcement measures including prosecution, and if found guilty of an offence under *The Environmental Management and Protection Act, 2002* or *The Clean Air Act*, they may be subject to substantial fines and/or imprisonment.
- Sites found to contain a substance that may cause, is causing or has caused an adverse effect to the environment, or harm to human health, may be designated as contaminated sites, or they may be subject to other forms of enforcement and/or remedial clean up orders. The cost of clean up can be fairly substantial and will be pursued against all possible parties.
- *The Hazardous Substances and Waste Dangerous Goods Regulations* may apply to the wire or ash derived from processing. This regulation requires ministerial approval for storage. Testing to date indicates a high likelihood that elevated levels of hazardous substances or waste dangerous goods can be expected in association with copper wire burning.