

# THE ROHS AND WEEE DIRECTIVES HELP IS AT HAND

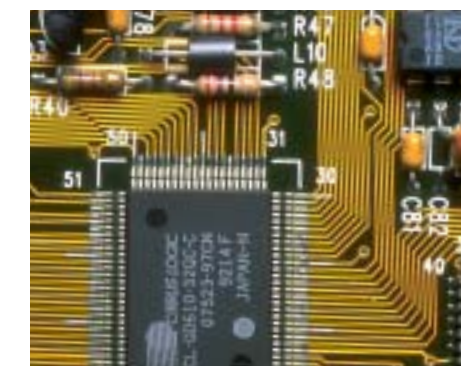
THE ROHS & WEEE DIRECTIVES WILL SOON IMPACT ALL PARTS OF THE UK ELECTRONICS INDUSTRY. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT ACTION IS TAKEN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO CONVERT MANUFACTURING PROCESSES AND TO PUT SYSTEMS IN PLACE TO ENSURE THAT COMPLIANCE CAN BE ACHIEVED BEFORE THE DEADLINE.

With just under one year to go before the Restriction of the Use of Certain Hazardous Substances in Electrical and Electronic Equipment (RoHS) Directive comes in to force, UK electronics manufacturers and suppliers are waking up to the implications of this important piece of legislation. This Directive will prohibit the use, in most electrical and electronic equipment, of several substances which are deemed to be harmful. The most well known material that will be banned is lead, which is found in the majority of solders traditionally used for electronic assembly operations.



Lead will have to be replaced in solders, as well as in printed circuit board and component solderable finishes. Whilst most companies are now aware that electronics will have to be lead-free from July 1st 2006, there is less knowledge of what the other proscribed materials are and where they occur. Cadmium, mercury, hexavalent chromium and certain brominated flame retardants will also be proscribed and a key challenge for the UK electronics industry is sourcing components that are free of these materials. Although the date for the removal of these materials is set, there have recently been issues over the list of exemptions that was originally thought to have been approved and attempts are currently underway to resolve the situation.

While larger UK electronics companies have already converted to lead-free, or are in the process of doing so, many smaller companies still have to get underway. A recent survey by Elnet found that thirty percent of organisations interviewed were still not actively preparing for lead-free soldering. There is no doubt that non-compliance with the RoHS Directive is not an option and those companies that leave it until too late may well have to take products off the market and thus risk losing valuable market share to their competitors. Many Japanese companies have already realized the commercial benefits of using less harmful materials and processes and they have done so well in advance of legislation.



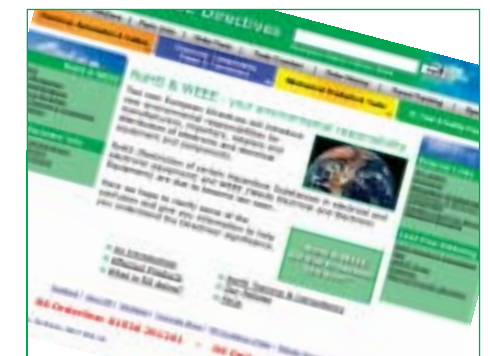
The RoHS Directive was originally part of the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive, which is more concerned with the recycling and recovery of materials from end-of-life electronics. In common with many other EU member states, the UK Government has encountered practical difficulties in meeting the Directive's legal deadline of August 13th 2005 for implementation of its obligations on producers and retailers. However, the Government is still planning to implement

obligations under WEEE relating to the marking of equipment, including indication of whether or not goods are put on the market after this date. Producers will also be required to register, either individually or via a compliance scheme and to report the weight and number of units put on the market during 2004.

To help UK industry to keep up to date on the latest position with these two important Directives and to help achieve compliance, Envirowise is holding ten free WEEE and RoHS Roadshows at locations around the country in the coming months. They are open to all businesses interested in, or impacted by, the new legislation and they will take the format of either a full-day seminar or a half-day seminar with a product related workshop during the other half of the day. For more information and to register for these events, visit [www.envirowise.gov.uk/events](http://www.envirowise.gov.uk/events). For specific advice on WEEE and RoHS related issues and for help with any other environment related issues call the Envirowise Helpline on 0800 585794.

Although, the RoHS Directive proscribes a relatively small number of substances, there is increasing pressure to restrict the use of many other materials and chemicals that find wide use in electronics and related applications. The list of materials that are coming under scrutiny continues to grow. Envirowise has published information about the more significant of these materials and this can be found at [www.envirowise.gov.uk/restrictedmaterials](http://www.envirowise.gov.uk/restrictedmaterials).

The WEEE and RoHS Directives will soon impact all parts of the UK electronics industry. It is important that action is taken as soon as possible to convert manufacturing processes and to put systems in place to ensure that compliance can be achieved before the deadline. There is only just under a year to go! ■



For more information on  
RoHS & WEEE visit  
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