

Current Status of Recycling of WEEE in Korea

Jae-chun Lee

Korea Institute of Geoscience & Mineral Resources (KIGAM)
30 Gajeong-dong, Yuseong-gu, Daejeon 305-350, Korea
Email: jclee@kigam.re.kr, Web : <http://www.kigam.re.kr>

Abstract

Recently, the amount of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) in Korea has greatly been increasing, as well as that from manufacturing sites. At an early stage, the driving force for the recycling of WEEE was the reclamation of precious metals such as gold, silver, platinum and palladium. However, the profitability of recycling diminishes as the amount of noble metals contained in each individual piece of equipment decreases, thus requiring more efficient recycling technology. Moreover, WEEE has been accompanied by environmental problems. In 2003, the Korean government introduced the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Program for personal computers and white-goods appliances such as TVs, washers, refrigerators and air conditioners. The program is scheduled to extend to cellular phones and audio equipment from 2005. However, the lack of recycling technology is expected to inhibit the success of the program. Realizing this, Korea Institute of Geoscience & Mineral Resources (KIGAM) has endeavored to develop WEEE recycling technology under a government-sponsored 10-year project. This presentation will introduce the present status of the recycling of WEEE in Korea and the activities of KIGAM on this subject.