

Recycling of plastic waste: Presence of phthalates in plastics from households and industry - DTU Orbit (09/11/2017)

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Plastics recycling has the potential to substitute virgin plastics partially as a source of raw materials in plastic product manufacturing. Plastic as a material may contain a variety of chemicals, some potentially hazardous. Phthalates, for instance, are a group of chemicals produced in large volumes and are commonly used as plasticisers in plastics manufacturing. Potential impacts on human health require restricted use in selected applications and a need for the closer monitoring of potential sources of human exposure. Although the presence of phthalates in a variety of plastics has been recognised, the influence of plastic recycling on phthalate content has been hypothesised but not well documented. In the present work we analysed selected phthalates (DMP, DEP, DPP, DiBP, DBP, BBzP, DEHP, DCHP and DnOP) in samples of waste plastics as well as recycled and virgin plastics. DBP, DiBP and DEHP had the highest frequency of detection in the samples analysed, with 360 µg/g, 460 µg/g and 2700 µg/g as the maximum measured concentrations, respectively. Among other, statistical analysis of the analytical results suggested that phthalates were potentially added in the later stages of plastic product manufacturing (labelling, gluing, etc.) and were not removed following recycling of household waste plastics. Furthermore, DEHP was identified as a potential indicator for phthalate contamination of plastics. Close monitoring of plastics intended for phthalates-sensitive applications is recommended if recycled plastics are to be used as raw material in production.

General information

State: Published

Organisations: Department of Environmental Engineering, Residual Resource Engineering, Environmental Chemistry, University of Girona

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Number of pages: 9

Pages: 44-52

Publication date: 2016

Main Research Area: Technical/natural sciences

Publication information

Journal: Waste Management

Volume: 54

ISSN (Print): 0956-053X

Ratings:

BFI (2017): BFI-level 2

Web of Science (2017): Indexed yes

BFI (2016): BFI-level 2

Scopus rating (2016): CiteScore 4 SJR 1.354 SNIP 2.044

Web of Science (2016): Indexed yes

BFI (2015): BFI-level 2

Scopus rating (2015): SJR 1.739 SNIP 2.256 CiteScore 4.33

Web of Science (2015): Indexed yes

BFI (2014): BFI-level 2

Scopus rating (2014): SJR 1.777 SNIP 2.482 CiteScore 3.43

Web of Science (2014): Indexed yes

BFI (2013): BFI-level 1

Scopus rating (2013): SJR 1.822 SNIP 2.435 CiteScore 3.39

ISI indexed (2013): ISI indexed yes

Web of Science (2013): Indexed yes

BFI (2012): BFI-level 1

Scopus rating (2012): SJR 1.611 SNIP 2.184 CiteScore 2.91

ISI indexed (2012): ISI indexed yes

Web of Science (2012): Indexed yes

BFI (2011): BFI-level 1

Scopus rating (2011): SJR 1.698 SNIP 2.085 CiteScore 2.99

ISI indexed (2011): ISI indexed yes

Web of Science (2011): Indexed yes

BFI (2010): BFI-level 1

Scopus rating (2010): SJR 1.555 SNIP 1.78

Web of Science (2010): Indexed yes
BFI (2009): BFI-level 1
Scopus rating (2009): SJR 1.502 SNIP 1.899
Web of Science (2009): Indexed yes
BFI (2008): BFI-level 2
Scopus rating (2008): SJR 1.378 SNIP 2.13
Web of Science (2008): Indexed yes
Scopus rating (2007): SJR 1.035 SNIP 1.767
Web of Science (2007): Indexed yes
Scopus rating (2006): SJR 1.046 SNIP 1.749
Web of Science (2006): Indexed yes
Scopus rating (2005): SJR 1.059 SNIP 1.65
Scopus rating (2004): SJR 1.289 SNIP 1.939
Web of Science (2004): Indexed yes
Scopus rating (2003): SJR 0.847 SNIP 1.269
Web of Science (2003): Indexed yes
Scopus rating (2002): SJR 0.561 SNIP 0.874
Scopus rating (2001): SJR 0.456 SNIP 0.696
Web of Science (2001): Indexed yes
Scopus rating (2000): SJR 0.271 SNIP 0.451
Scopus rating (1999): SJR 0.262 SNIP 0.479

Original language: English

Waste Management and Disposal, Compositional data, Contaminants, Endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs), Quality recycling, Solid waste, Chemicals, Elastomers, Endocrine disrupters, Esters, Impurities, Manufacture, Plastic products, Plastics applications, Potassium compounds, Recycling, Solid wastes, Solvents, Analytical results, Endocrine disrupting chemicals, Plastics manufacturing, Plastics recycling, Potential indicators, Product manufacturing, Sensitive application, Plastics industry

DOIs:

10.1016/j.wasman.2016.05.014

Source: FindIt

Source-ID: 2305443395

Publication: Research - peer-review › Journal article – Annual report year: 2016