

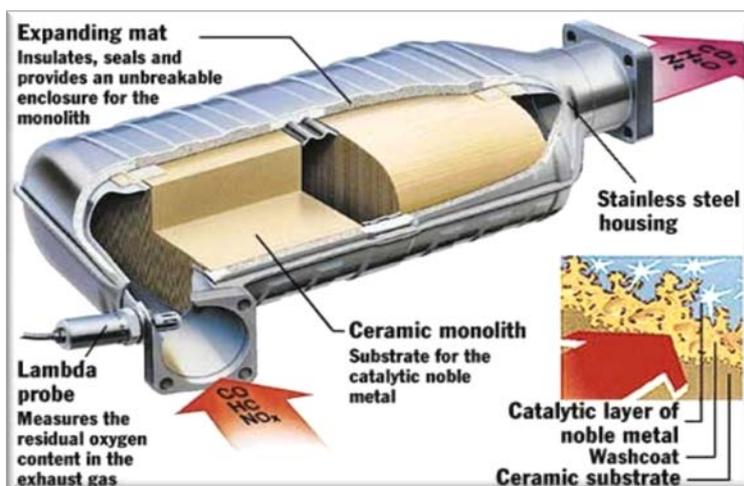
Metals Recycling Sector

Brief – RCF matting in catalytic converters.

February 2016

Summary

We have recently become aware that the support mat contained within some catalytic converters is made from refractory ceramic fibre (RCF). The European Chemicals Agency has reviewed RCF support mats in catalytic converters and included it on a short list of hazardous substances of very high concern. RCF is classified as a Cat 1B carcinogen and has properties very similar to asbestos. This makes catalytic converters containing an RCF mat hazardous waste. [Pictures of RCF matting.](#)



Source <http://www.air-quality.org.uk/>

Hazardous waste

Catalytic converters with RCF mat should be classified as hazardous waste (List of Waste code 16 01 21*) and the mat when removed from the metal casing and catalyst would also be hazardous waste (List of Waste code 16 *).

Clearly, there are both environmental and health and safety concerns if the decanning process, handling and storage of the RCF matting is not carried out appropriately using the correct equipment. If you come across a decanning process that you have concerns about it you can [report your concern to the HSE](#)

Despite enquiries we have not been able to determine what proportion of catalytic converters contain RCF matting and there does not appear to be an easy way to determine if a catalytic converter has an RCF mat until it is opened. Unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there is a way of distinguishing catalytic converters containing RCF from those that don't they must be classed as hazardous waste.

In the briefings and letters we are sending out we have invited companies and trade bodies to provide any information and means of identifying whether or not a catalytic converter has a RCF mat prior to the decanning process. We will ensure any information is shared with you.

We are currently preparing a quick guide with the HSE and will shortly be circulating a draft for comments both internally and externally.

Low risk positions

We currently have two [low risk waste positions](#) (LRWP 362 & LRWP 405) which allow the storage, sorting and dismantling of motor vehicle catalytic converters. We are in the process of withdrawing these positions given the environmental and the health and safety risks associated with handling the RCF matting. We are writing to companies that are advertising that they process catalytic converters and sending a briefing note out to the trade associations. We have allowed a **3 month transitional period till 30 May 2016** before we withdraw these positions. This will allow operators time to apply for the appropriate environmental permit or cease processing catalytic converters. You may be contacted by these companies for advice on permit applications. A list of these companies we are aware of is attached overleaf.

Permitted sites

We are aware that there are currently four permitted sites processing catalytic converters. If these sites are handling catalytic converters with RCF matting they will need to ensure their permit enables them to process hazardous waste. We are proposing a **3 month transitional period till 30 May 2016** for these companies to apply to vary their permit or cease processing catalytic converters with RCF matting.

Storage of catalytic converters at ELV sites:

We will send out a briefing note to relevant trade bodies and copies will also be available for Officers to take with them to site:

- These should be stored in a manner that does not result in the metal casing being breached.
- Catalytic converters containing RCF matting should be consigned from site as hazardous waste 16 01 21* Unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there is a way of distinguishing catalytic converters containing RCF from those that don't they must be classed as hazardous waste and consigned from site.
- No decanning or further processing should be done on site unless a permit is in place to allow this and the process and machinery is suitable.

Wording of the LRWPs

LRWP 362

The secure storage, sorting and dismantling of motor vehicle catalytic converters, providing the operations are carried out within a building and on an impermeable pavement.

A maximum of 10 tonnes of whole and treated catalytic converters can be stored at any one time.

A maximum of 10 tonnes/week of whole catalytic converters can be processed.

LRWP 405

The secure storage and mechanical treatment of the honey comb centre within catalytic converters for the purpose of recovery. The storage and treatment must be within a building, on impermeable pavement and the process subject to dust extraction.

The storage and processing limits are those set out in LRW362 for whole catalytic converters.

List of sites advertising that they accept and process catalytic converters on Google:

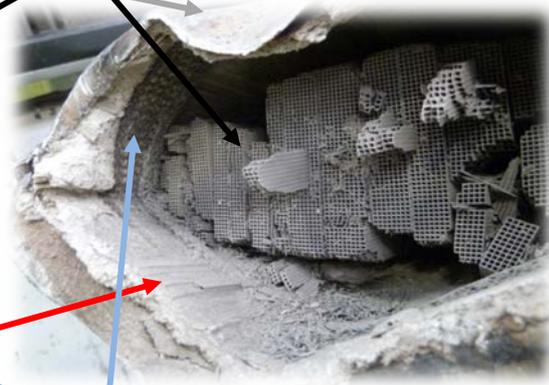
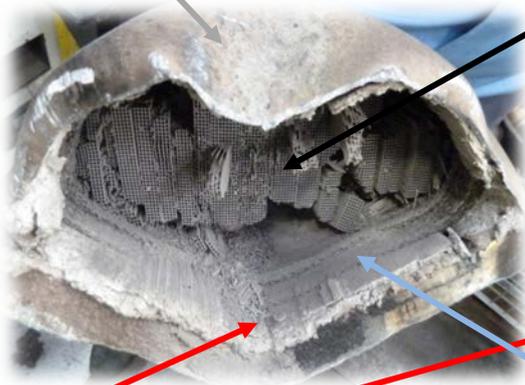
{list - removed}

Photographs showing the internal structure of a catalytic converter.

Metal external casing

Honeycomb centre

(the catalyst) containing precious metals



RCF matting

metal banding securing the RCF matting



Metal mesh matting in a catalytic converter without RCF matting