

*Adapted from EP&T,  
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## Products on review

# The RoHS Directive & Electrical Enclosures



### How does RoHS impact on you?

RoHS means Restriction of Hazardous Substances (used in Electrical and Electronic Equipment). It is a Directive adopted by the European Parliament in January 2003 with planned effect for July 1, 2006. Legally it only applies to certain goods put into the market in the European Union after the effective date, but as a practical matter, the RoHS Directive is fast becoming a de facto standard for the industrialized world. The RoHS Directive applies to specific, but quite broad, categories of electrical products. These are typically market-ready products and finished assemblies, as RoHS does not apply to components.



Over 750 Fibox RoHS compliant enclosures

### The RoHS Directive and the Fibox Specifier

As a manufacturer of electrical enclosures, how has Fibox met its responsibilities towards RoHS compliance?

The RoHS Directive applies to categories of electrical products, where Fibox products are extensively used. Electrical enclosures, defined as components, are not directly governed by the RoHS Directive. But while RoHS does not apply directly, finished assemblies are constructed of components. RoHS compliance of the final assembly becomes a function not only of compliance in manufacturing, but also the compliance of all individual components used in the assembly. Simply put, the enclosure must be RoHS compliant.



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## Products on review

*page 2*

For Fibox, that meant that our customers were quite insistent upon knowing that the Fibox enclosures did not contain any RoHS prohibited materials. While RoHS did not directly apply to Fibox product, clearly our responsibility to our customers was to guarantee our compliance with the intent of the RoHS directive and provide them with enclosures that would not prevent successful compliance of their market ready product.

Fibox (at the corporate level) began the RoHS compliance project in earnest in the summer of 2004. Fibox enclosures are molded using precise formulations of engineered plastics that are available from limited suppliers. Any RoHS compliance problems requiring a change of material would necessitate lengthy evaluations, mold testing and regulatory review. Therefore, our first steps had to be evaluation of our plastic raw materials and of our critical suppliers. In this we were fortunate as all materials and suppliers were OK without additional actions.

The second phase of ensuring RoHS compliance was begun in early 2005. Fibox listed all components and their 3rd party suppliers and sent out questionnaires. Most suppliers responded quickly, but some needed numerous reminders. It became clear that RoHS was not well known or understood by many companies, both large and small. Fibox was forced to take a proactive role in educating these suppliers about the intent and detail of the RoHS Directive.

Again Fibox was fortunate that there were very few non-RoHS compliant 3rd party components. Most were corrected quite easily, but a few were more difficult. For example, some surface treatments for metal hardware required change. All required changes were completed.

Fibox realized early that while RoHS did not directly apply to electrical enclosures, the intent of the Directive was to force all component manufacturers to be (or become) responsible suppliers of RoHS compliant products. Fibox products marketed in North America were RoHS compliant prior to 2006. In Europe, Fibox will be fully compliant with the RoHS directive prior to July 2006.

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