

The Future of Urban Mining

Urban Mining, a concept that emphasizes the potential of cities, the human habitat and built environment as a source of raw materials supply, has the potential to provide a significant source of raw materials. This is due to new research and findings by Fraunhofer ISI, a leading independent innovation research institute in Europe.

Commissioned by the International Copper Association (ICA), the research found Urban Mining secures raw materials by exploring for, extracting and refining anthropogenic resources. For copper, this 'anthropogenic stock' can come from resources, including electronic goods, buildings and mine tailings. These metals and minerals still originate from conventional mining, but their recovery through Urban Mining allows for a degree of independence from natural resources, increasing supply security.

By recycling end-of-life products and keeping them in the supply chain for longer, where possible, the Urban Mine is an important element of the circular economy; the system collects already discarded products and returns the secondary raw materials to the economy.

Luis Tercero, Coordinator of Business Unit Raw Materials at Fraunhofer ISI said, "Urban Mining presents a potential opportunity for the future copper industry, and wider mining, to adopt more sustainable practices. By treating waste as a resource, this study finds Urban Mining is important, alongside conventional mining, to meeting the increasing demand for raw materials."

Introducing Urban Mining practices requires engagement and regulation from governments to support adequate infrastructures, alongside an internationally uniform system and support from an informed and committed public. Equally significant, research and technology development are required to enable the process and mobilize relevant industry groups.

Colin Bennett, Market Intelligence Director at ICA, said, "This is important research that presents the roadmap for the potential of Urban Mining and the copper sector engaging further with the circular economy. Among market commentators, material demand is predicted to grow globally, and Urban Mining provides the potential to effectively reuse secondary copper materials, more sustainably."

For more information visit the [Urban Mining page](#) on the ICA website.

About the International Copper Association

The International Copper Association (ICA) brings together the global copper industry to develop and defend markets for copper and make a positive contribution to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., ICA has offices in three primary regions: Asia, Europe and North America. ICA and its Copper Alliance® partners are active in more than 60 countries worldwide. For additional information, please visit www.copperalliance.org.

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