SELENIUM

(Data in metric tons of selenium content unless otherwise noted)

Domestic Production and Use: Primary selenium was recovered from anode slimes generated in the electrolytic refining of copper. One copper refinery in Texas reported domestic production of primary selenium. One producer exported semirefined selenium for toll-refining in Asia, and three other companies generated selenium-containing slimes, which were exported for processing.

The estimated consumption of selenium by end use was as follows: glass manufacturing, 37%; chemicals and pigments, 20%; electronics, 10%; and other, including agriculture and metallurgy, 33%. In glass manufacturing, selenium is used to decolorize the green tint caused by iron impurities in glass containers and other soda-lime silica glass and is used in architectural plate glass to reduce solar heat transmission. It is also used, as cadmium sulfoselenide, in plastics, ceramics, art glass, and other glasses, such as that used in traffic lights to produce a ruby red color. Selenium is used in catalysts to enhance selective oxidation; in plating solutions, where it improves appearance and durability; in blasting caps and gun bluing; in rubber compounding chemicals; and to increase yields in the electrolytic production of manganese.

Selenium is used as a human dietary supplement and in antidandruff shampoos. The leading agricultural uses are as a dietary supplement for livestock and as a fertilizer additive to enrich selenium-poor soils. It is used as a metallurgical additive to improve machinability of copper, lead, and steel alloys. Its primary electronic use was as a photoreceptor on the drums of copiers, but now it is only used for replacement parts for older copiers, which are gradually being replaced by newer models that do not use selenium in the reproduction process. A new use for selenium was in amorphous selenium (aSe) detector technology. The aSe detector enables the direct conversion of X-ray to digital information.

Salient Statistics—United States:	**2000**	**2001**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**[e]
Production, refinery	W	W	W	W	W
Imports for consumption, metal and dioxide	476	483	422	367	390
Exports, metal, waste and scrap	82	41	85	243	90
Consumption, apparent[1]	W	W	W	W	W
Price, dealers, average, dollars per pound, 100-pound lots, refined	3.84	3.80	4.27	5.68	27.00
Stocks, producer, refined, yearend	W	W	W	W	W
Employment, number	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Net import reliance[2] as a percentage of apparent consumption	W	W	W	W	W

Recycling: There was no domestic production of secondary selenium. Scrap xerographic materials were exported for recovery of the contained selenium. However, as electronic recycling continues to increase, a small amount of selenium could become available.

Import Sources (2000-03): Canada, 49%; Philippines, 21%; Belgium, 10%; Germany, 6%; and other, 14%.

Tariff: **Item**	**Number**	**Normal Trade Relations 12-31-04**
Selenium metal	2804.90.0000	Free.
Selenium dioxide	2811.29.2000	Free.

Depletion Allowance: 14% (Domestic and foreign).

Government Stockpile: None.

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Events, Trends, and Issues: The supply of selenium is directly affected by the supply of the materials from which it is a byproduct, copper and to a lesser extent nickel and cobalt. The annual global consumption of selenium in 2004 was estimated to have been about 2,700 tons. Production of selenium increased in 2004 as worldwide copper production increased. With much of the world's production committed to long-term contracts, selenium was not available on the spot market. This resulted in some concern about the selenium supply and caused the price of selenium to increase from $9.00-$10.50 per pound in January 2004 to $28.00-$30.00 by the beginning of the fourth quarter of 2004.

Domestic selenium exports returned to normal levels in 2004. An overstock of selenium materials, caused by continued low prices, was sold off in 2003 because of the large increase in price. Much of the selenium was exported to the Philippines for further processing and finally sold to China. Exports to the Philippines increased 243% in 2003 as compared with those of 2002.

The use of selenium in China rose with continued interest in selenium as a fertilizer supplement, as an ingredient in glassmaking, and as selenium dioxide substituting for sulfur dioxide in the manganese smelting process.

The use of selenium in glass remained strong, while use in copiers continued to decline. The use of selenium as a substitute for lead in free-machining brasses continued to increase as more stringent regulations on the use of lead were implemented. The use of selenium supplements in the plant-animal-human food chain increased as its health benefits were confirmed. Increased selenium supplementation in fertilizer has been used to achieve this public health benefit. Although small amounts of selenium in the soil are considered beneficial, it can be hazardous in larger quantities.

World Refinery Production, Reserves, and Reserve Base:

	Refinery production		Reserves[3]	Reserve base[3]
	2003	2004[e]		
United States	W	W	10,000	19,000
Belgium	200	200	—	—
Canada	230	250	6,400	10,000
Chile	40	40	16,000	37,000
Finland	40	50	—	—
Germany	100	100	—	—
India	12	12	—	—
Japan	715	750	—	—
Peru	16	20	5,000	8,000
Philippines	40	40	2,000	3,000
Serbia and Montenegro	20	20	1,000	2,000
Sweden	20	20	—	—
Other countries[4]	NA	NA	42,000	90,000
World total (rounded)	[5]1,430	[5]1,500	82,000	170,000

World Resources: The reserve base for selenium is based on identified economic copper deposits. An additional 2.5 times this reserve base is estimated to exist in copper and other metal deposits that have not yet been developed. Coal generally contains between 0.5 and 12 parts per million of selenium, or about 80 to 90 times the average for copper deposits. The recovery of selenium from coal does not appear likely in the foreseeable future.

Substitutes: High-purity silicon has replaced selenium in high-voltage rectifiers. Silicon is also the major substitute for selenium in low- and medium-voltage rectifiers and solar photovoltaic cells. Amorphous silicon and organic photoreceptors are substitutes in xerographic document copiers. Organic pigments have been developed as substitutes for cadmium sulfoselenide pigments. Other substitutes include cerium oxide as either a colorant or decolorant in glass; tellurium in pigments and rubber; bismuth, lead, and tellurium in free-machining alloys; and bismuth and tellurium in lead-free brasses.

[e]Estimated. NA Not available. W Withheld to avoid disclosing company proprietary data. — Zero.
[1]Defined as reported shipments + imports of selenium metal – estimated exports of selenium metal, excluding scrap.
[2]Defined as imports – exports + adjustments for Government and industry stock changes.
[3]See Appendix C for definitions.
[4]In addition to the countries listed, Australia, China, Kazakhstan, Russia, and the United Kingdom are known to produce refined selenium, but output is not reported and information is inadequate for formulation of reliable production estimates.
[5]Excludes U.S. production.