

Copper Refining: Introduction

Copper is a strong, unreactive, reddish-brown metal. It is vital to modern life because it is such a good conductor of heat and electricity. It is used in electrical wiring and also in plumbing pipes, so you will see it whenever you wire a plug or have unpainted pipes in your central heating system. It is used to make brass and to a small extent in jewellery.



Some background

Copper has been used by mankind since as long ago as 8000 BC, which makes it one of the earliest elements known. Because copper is an unreactive metal, impure metallic copper is sometimes found uncombined with other elements, in the form of large boulders. This copper can be purified on site by building a dam around the boulder, filling the dam with copper sulfate electrolyte, and making the copper boulder the anode in an electrolysis cell.

Did you know?

Some people wear copper bracelets which they believe helps ward off rheumatism.

A £1 coin is 70% copper, 5.5% nickel and 24.5% zinc.

Bronze, an alloy of copper and tin, was first made about 5500 years ago.

Copper metal slowly corrodes to form green copper carbonate - called verdigris.

We need between 1 and 3 mg of copper in our daily diet.