

ELVs as a Key Resource for the Circular Economy

11/12/2025 How OEMs can secure stable return flows.

For decades, end-of-life vehicles (ELVs) were seen primarily as a waste problem: abandoned in backyards, shipped to third countries, or dismantled in informal workshops. The reality was marked by losses, lack of transparency, and environmental harm. Today, vehicles leaving the road are far more than scrap metal. They contain numerous valuable raw materials that are increasingly in demand.

Every year, around six million passenger cars in Europe reach the end of their life cycle, representing material worth in the tens of billions of euros. Steel and aluminum remain the largest material groups, complemented by copper from wiring harnesses and high-grade plastics from interiors and body parts. Newer vehicles also contain rare earths, permanent magnets, and lithium-ion batteries. With the rise of e-mobility, the share of these components is soaring: by 2040, roughly one-third of ELVs will be battery-electric, carrying significant volumes of battery cells, power electronics, and critical metals.

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