

BEST Practices For Lead Battery Manufacturers

FAQs on Developing Environmental Standards For Lead Battery Manufacturers

1) How does the development of a battery standard fit into existing laws and regulations?

The standard is intended to go beyond minimal regulatory requirements and instead provide a voluntary framework for companies seeking recognition for doing more. In some cases the standards may be similar to regulatory requirements, but our program includes an independent verification process to ensure that key parameters are being met on a consistent basis. In rare cases when laws or regulations are more restrictive than these voluntary standards, the audit would defer to the local legal requirement.

2) How would an international standard and eco-label relate to local laws and regulations?

The provisions of the BEST voluntary standard may differ from applicable local, state, or national regulatory requirements. If regulatory requirements at a lead battery manufacturing plant are more stringent, or require more frequent verification than outlined in this standard, then the regulatory provisions shall take precedence and become the de facto requirement in that jurisdiction.

3) Who will provide independent verification that battery plants meet these standards?

An International Secretariat will accredit individuals to act as auditors and provide governance over the auditors, certification, and use of the eco-label. In addition, the Secretariat will be responsible for maintaining and updating the standard in accordance with agreed upon procedures. The license for the use of the eco-label will be issued by OK International, a non-governmental organization (NGO), to battery companies that have demonstrated compliance with the BEST standard.

4) What will be the value of the eco-label?

The value of any eco-label ultimately rests on the integrity, transparency, and independence of the standard setting process. Standards that have been developed in an open and transparent manner are more likely to achieve their environmental objectives. The value of the certification will grow with its adoption.

5) If the U.S. and EU already have well developed standards, how can an independent NGO offer an international standard?

Many countries have environmental and occupational standards that address exposures, emissions and product stewardship in the lead battery industry. However, none of these regulators offers an independent verification and eco-labeling program to insure that minimum performance standards are being consistently followed. Our intent is not to duplicate existing standards, but to provide a comprehensive measure of battery plant performance based on key performance parameters.

6) Why is the standard an international standard if it is initially started in India?

The battery standard is being implemented first in India, but because the industry is fairly uniform with similar inputs and outputs throughout the world, the standard is intended to be internationally applied. It is important to gain recognition for the standard beyond India as the market for lead batteries is increasingly operating on a global scale.

7) What is the relationship between an international accreditation organization and a regulatory agency?

The battery standard is being designed to operate as part of an international accreditation organization. The standard setting process will include input from national regulatory agencies as well as companies and NGOs operating internationally. One advantage that international accreditation organizations have is that they have worldwide mutual recognition for certifications issued by accredited certifiers and therefore are not viewed as trade restrictive.

8) Who will do the audits and how can the quality of the auditors be maintained.

The audits will be conducted by accredited auditors who have sufficient background and have obtained training to conduct all or parts of the audit process. The international Secretariat, with input from an international board, will provide oversight of the auditor's performance, hear any appeals, and resolve disputes that may arise.

9) What is the governance structure of the International Secretariat?

The governance structure of the International Secretariat, like the actual standards, will be developed by a multi-stakeholder panel brought together to represent the interests of industry, major purchasers, affected communities, governments, and NGOs. It is expected that the governance of the Secretariat will be based on a specific formula to allow the participation of these interests in the ongoing implementation of the program. This type of governance is used by most independent accreditation bodies covering fair labor practices, sustainable marine fisheries, and other similar efforts.