

BEST News

Better Environmental Sustainability Targets (BEST)

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OK International Sponsors Lead Battery Conference in Beijing

OK International, in partnership with the Vehicle Emission Control Center (VECC) of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and China Automotive Technology and Research Center (CATARC), organized a workshop on the “Adoption of Sustainable Practices for Lead Battery Manufacturing” to raise awareness of lead hazards, encourage the adoption of voluntary certification standards, and to promote improvements in the manufacturing and recycling of lead batteries. Conference attendees included representatives from the lead battery industry, major automobile manufacturers, recyclers and the government.



Yue Wangkun, Director Circular Economy Development Division of National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), Addresses the Workshop on September 28th, 2010

The meeting specifically addressed China’s recent regulations addressing lead battery recycling. Several speakers explained how the Better Environmental Sustainability Targets (BEST) certification can help encourage the adoption of sustainable environmental practices in the lead battery industry. The workshop speakers included Perry Gottesfeld (OK International), Russell Kemp (ENVIRON), Jinliang Zhang (Ministry of Environmental Protection), Ma Jun (IPE), Qimin Guo (NDRC), and Dagang Tang (VECC).

Zamfara, Nigeria - 400 Children Dead Due to Lead Released During Illegal Gold Mining

More than 400 children have died since March due to lead poisoning from small-scale gold mining activities in Nigeria’s northwest Zamfara State. As local

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villagers processed local ore to extract gold, they transported and dumped the lead-contaminated soil in and around their homes. Children became poisoned after playing in the contaminated material and through contact with lead dust and ore brought into their homes. Medical camps have been established to treat poisoned children and pregnant women.

Since June, cleanup efforts have commenced in two villages, however many more areas are still contaminated. A recent report by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Health Ministry of Zamfara State has indicated that children in 180 villages around Nigeria may be contaminated with lead. Unless the cleanup is done properly and in a timely manner, exposures will continue as people return home to their villages.

CNCIA Supports Global Paint Partnership

Perry Gottesfeld of OK International and Dr. Zhang Jinliang of the Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences (CRAES) held a meeting on behalf of the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead in Paints with Yue Wangkun, Secretary General of the China National Coatings Industry Association (CNCIA) on September 30th.



Zhang Jinliang (CRAES), Yue Wangkun (CNCIA), and Perry Gottesfeld (OK International)

The group discussed the goals of the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead in Paints and possible areas of collaboration. Mr. Gottesfeld provided the association with laboratory results from samples of several architectural paints from different manufacturers taken earlier this year in Beijing demonstrating the presence of lead in significant concentrations. The CNCIA has a membership of close to 500 paint manufacturers and ingredient suppliers

throughout China. Mr. Yue expressed support of the Global Alliance and is interested in initiating joint outreach and educational activities with CNCIA members on alternatives to lead in paint.

CDC Advisory Board to Consider Blood Lead Level Guidance for Children

The U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) Advisory Committee on Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention will meet in November and the agenda will include a discussion on lowering the current lead exposure guidance level for children. The current guidance for children set in 1991 indicates a "level of concern" for blood lead levels (BLLs) in excess of 10 micrograms per deciliter (ug/dl).

A similar governmental advisory board in Germany, the Human Biomonitoring

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Commission (HBC) of the Federal Environmental Agency, has recently issued guidelines with a recommended blood lead reference value for children of 3.5 ug/dl. The World Health Organization (WHO) has also initiated the process to update its guidelines. The English version of the guidance issued by HBC was published in the July issue of the International Journal of Hygiene and Environmental Health (2010 Jul;213(4):265-9).

FACT: More than 60% of lead ore mined in the U.S. is exported to China and South Korea for processing.

Electrotherm in Talks to Acquire US-Based Firefly

Electrotherm India Ltd, an electric two-wheeler manufacturer based in Gujarat, India, is in negotiations to acquire US based battery company, Firefly Energy. Firefly pioneered carbon-based lead acid battery technology to obtain a significantly longer battery life with a lower lead content. This technology may be useful in powering Electrotherm's electric motorcycles. The acquisition of Firefly may also assist Electrotherm in licensing patents and technology from Firefly.

Levi Strauss and H&M Ban Sandblasting of Jeans

In September, clothing retailers Levi Strauss & Co and H&M announced plans to eliminate all sandblasted garments from their product lines by the end of the year. Sandblasting, a method used to create a faded effect and soften denim, is a process known to cause acute silicosis. It has been banned in many U.S. states, in some European countries and more recently, in Turkey after 44 textile workers died and 600 were diagnosed with silicosis. Sandblasting is still widely used in major garment producing nations in Asia, including Bangladesh, China, and India.



Garment Worker Sandblasting Jeans in Bangladesh

(Photo Courtesy of Allison Joyce)

Mass Lead Poisoning Incidents Continue in China

Since our last BEST News in May, three more lead poisonings have been reported around lead battery manufacturing facilities in China. These three incidents occurred in Hubei, Jiangsu, and Anhui Provinces and are known to have impacted over 130 people, the majority of them children. According to residents near the Huifeng Power Company, the manufacturer responsible for poisoning over one hundred children in Anhui, three schools attended by at least 8,000 students are located near the plant.

Global Action to Address Lead and Cadmium

The results of multiple year review of need to address lead and cadmium will be presented at the 26th Session of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in February 2011. In 2009, the UNEP Chemicals Branch requested that a review be conducted to address the data and information gaps identified in its current file of scientific information on lead and cadmium. This review is in the final stages and is intended to inform discussion on the need for global action to address the environmental and human health risks of lead and cadmium. For more on this effort and to read the review as it becomes available visit:

http://www.chem.unep.ch/Pb_and_Cd/SR/Finalization_reviews_prior_GC26.htm

New Regulation in Vietnam on Collection and Recycling

New standards for the collection, handling, and recycling of used and discarded products are currently under development in Vietnam. Among other products, the regulation will cover used lead acid batteries and electronic waste. The regulations will extend producer responsibility and require that a specified percentage of batteries are collected by manufacturers for recycling at approved facilities. Fees will be imposed on manufacturers on a yearly basis for the volume of disposed products that they are unable to collect for processing.

U.S. Federal Trade Commission to Revise Standards for 'Green' Product Labels

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is currently reviewing its "Green Guides" to ensure that product labeling does not make environmental claims that are inaccurate or deceptive. The proposed revisions to update the Guide will restrict the use of unqualified green claims, including the use of certifications and seals that do not provide information on the environmental criteria and environmental benefits of the specified certification. Companies will be required to disclose if a certification is issued internally or by a third party. The FTC is accepting public comments on the proposed changes until December 10, 2010. More information on the proposed revisions can be found at the FTC website:

<http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2010/10/greenguide.shtm>

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