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AUTOMOTIVE LEADERS ADOPT ENVIRONMENTAL CERTIFICATION FOR LEAD BATTERY MANUFACTURING

New Delhi, India – Occupational Knowledge International (OK International) announces the launch of the Better Environmental Sustainability Targets (BEST) certification for lead battery manufacturers following its adoption by industry leaders, motive vehicle manufacturers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The announcement is being made at OK International's exhibit at the Auto Expo in New Delhi from January 10-17, 2008.

Under the BEST program, lead battery manufacturing facilities that implement a collection program and meet minimum emission standards for used batteries will be eligible to place the eco-label on their products. This is an international effort which is being launched first in India.

The BEST certification standard was developed through a two-year multi-stakeholder process organized by OK International of San Francisco, Development Alternatives of New Delhi and the National Referral Centre for Lead Poisoning in India in Bangalore.

Major battery manufacturers and automotive firms including Hero Honda, Tata Motors, developed the standard along with Indian government representatives. The Standard was formally adopted by all participants at a board meeting in Bangalore in November.

The BEST program was recognized as one of the world's top 12 projects for sustainable development by the SEEDs Award -- Supporting Entrepreneurs for Environment and Development -- sponsored by the United Nations Environment and Development Programs.

It is the first voluntary certification effort developed by a consensus of industry and environmental organizations for manufacturing an industrial product while protecting public health and the environment.

Mr. Vijayanand, Deputy General Manager, Amara Raja Batteries Ltd. said, "As a responsible manufacturer of lead acid batteries we have taken it upon ourselves to work towards a standard put together by our NGO partners in the areas of lead emission and battery handling. This is a long term benefit for the world at large and also for the way the battery industry is perceived."

Mr. Rakesh Baweja, Assistant General Manager, Hero Honda, noted, "The BEST Standard is desperately needed due to the growth of the battery industry for two wheelers and automobiles in India".



Mr. A. Srinivas, Senior General Manager, Mahindra and Mahindra, said, “OK International deserves significant credit for initiating this important effort to encourage more sustainable battery production in India and abroad”.

Gottesfeld, who founded OK International in 1999 to promote innovative strategies to reduce exposures to lead and other hazardous materials in the developing world, said, “This is a great success demonstrating that working in partnership with the battery industry can bring about real improvements.”

“Adoption of the BEST eco-label provides a great incentive for companies to improve pollution controls in India and other countries.”

Funding to launch this process came from the World Bank’s International Finance Corporation (IFC), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the Deshpande Foundation, the Quality Council of India, and private foundations.

It is anticipated that the first companies in India will be eligible for certification during 2008.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 120 million people are over exposed to lead -- three times the number infected by HIV/AIDS --and that 99 percent of the most severely affected are in developing countries. Batteries account for more than 80 per cent all lead production.

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For additional information and photographs see:

<http://www.okinternational.org/lead.html> /



About Occupational Knowledge International

Occupational Knowledge International (OK International) is a non-governmental organization based in San Francisco, California dedicated to improving public health through innovative strategies to reduce exposures to industrial pollutants. The organization seeks to address inequities in environmental standards by working in partnership with industry, government and NGOs. For more information, please visit www.okinternational.org or email okperry@gmail.com.

About National Referral Centre for Lead Poisoning (NRCLPI)

The NRCLPI at St. John's Medical college, Bangalore, is a national network of eight regional centers working in partnership with Governmental and Non Governmental Organizations in creating awareness about the health hazards of lead. The organization also has laboratory facilities to perform blood lead monitoring at St. John's National Academy of Health Sciences. See: www.leadpoison.net

The BEST Eco-label:



BEST
Better Environmental
Sustainability Targets