



Lead-Acid Batteries – Requirements for Retailers & Wholesalers

Waste/Hazardous Waste #4.07, rev. June 2003

This fact sheet prepared in cooperation with Metropolitan County Hazardous Waste staff to provide battery management guidance to lead-acid battery retailers and wholesalers.

Contents

Environmental Concerns	1
Retailer Requirements .	1
Storing Spent Batteries	2
Inspecting Batteries	2
Wholesaler Requirements	2
More Information	2

Environmental Concerns

Lead acid batteries are those made of lead plates, usually encased in plastic and containing an acid electrolyte, such as sulfuric acid. These batteries are commonly found in vehicles, boats, depth finders, motorcycles, snowmobiles, motorized wheelchairs, and all-terrain vehicles.

If managed improperly, spent lead-acid batteries may leak or spill and cause lead and/or acid contamination of the soil and ground water. Persons who generate, collect or accumulate spent lead-acid batteries are responsible for proper storage and containment of leaks or spills.

Lead-acid Battery Retailer Requirements

State law requires retailers of lead-acid batteries to meet these requirements to ensure the batteries are recycled:

- Retailers must **accept up to five batteries** from consumers free of charge, whether or not the consumers are making a purchase. (This is intended to provide a convenient recycling system for consumers.)
- Retailers must **send all batteries** received from consumers **to be recycled**. Lead-acid batteries are dangerous materials and pose hazards when placed in the trash because of the corrosive acid and toxic lead they contain. For this reason, and to conserve resources, state law requires the batteries to be recycled. Some

suppliers will take batteries back from retailers and send them to be recycled. Recycling operations reclaim or recycle the lead, plastic, and acid portions of the batteries. This requirement is intended to prevent environmental contamination from improper lead-acid battery disposal, and to conserve resources.

- Retailers must **charge** the purchaser of a lead-acid battery a five-dollar (\$5) surcharge for each battery purchased for which a used battery is not returned. One exception: Retailers may not charge a five-dollar (\$5) surcharge on boat motor batteries that are purchased at the same time as a new boat motor.
- Retailers must **refund** the five-dollar (\$5) surcharge to the purchaser if, within 30 days of purchase, the purchaser returns a used battery to the retailer along with the receipt from the purchase of the new battery from that retailer. The retailer may keep surcharges that are not refunded. This requirement is intended to serve as an incentive to consumers to have their used lead-acid batteries recycled.
- Retailers must **post a notice** regarding the purchasing and disposal laws for lead-acid batteries. Signs containing the appropriate information are available by calling the Department of Public Service, Weights and Measure Division at (651) 639-4010 and are available for printing directly from the MPCA Web site at <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/waste/pubs/business.html#specific>.



Retailers may post their own signs, provided the signs are at least 8 1/2" x 11" size and state:

“Notice: Used Batteries

This retailer is required to accept your used lead acid batteries, even if you do not purchase a battery.

When you purchase a new battery, you will be charged an additional \$5 unless you return a used battery within 30 days. It is a crime to put a motor vehicle battery in the garbage.”

(This requirement informs consumers of their responsibilities and retailer responsibilities regarding used LAB management.)

- **Newspaper advertisements** for the retail sale of lead-acid batteries **must state:**

“\$5 additional charge unless a used lead acid battery is returned. Improper disposal of a lead acid battery is a crime.”

Meeting this requirement will help inform consumers of their responsibilities for used lead-acid battery management and prevent confusion at the time of purchase.

- Lead-acid battery retailers must **store** spent lead-acid batteries in accordance with the Minnesota hazardous waste rules outlined below before sending them for recycling.

Storing Spent Batteries

Spent lead acid batteries (SLABs) may be stored either indoors or outdoors. *Indoors* means in a building having a roof and at least three walls which are permanently attached to an impermeable floor which lies directly on the ground. Semitrailers and floorless sheds do not qualify as indoor storage areas.

When storing indoors, store SLABs on a non-reactive, curbed and impermeable surface. A non-reactive and impermeable surface will help ensure that acid and lead will not corrode or pass through the containment area and leak into soil or ground water. Curbing will prevent leaks or spills from running off the edge of the containment area.

If your storage area has a floor drain:

- place the batteries in a plastic tub or other container that will provide adequate containment of a spill or leak;
- seal the floor drain; or
- place a dike or berm around the floor drain.

When storing outdoors, store SLABs on a non-reactive, curbed and impermeable surface. Construct the outdoor storage area in a way that will prevent rain, snow, and draining water from entering.

Inspecting Batteries

Inspect batteries regularly for cracks or leaks. Because SLABs stored *outdoors* have a greater possibility of cracking and leaking due to freezing and thawing, they should be inspected more often.

Place cracked or leaking batteries in an acid-resistant, leakproof, closed container.

Report any uncontained spill by calling the Minnesota Duty Officer at one of these 24-hour numbers:

Minnesota Duty Officer	
Local area:	(651) 649-5451
Greater Minnesota	(800) 422-0798

Wholesaler Requirements

Lead-acid battery wholesalers must accept lead-acid batteries from customers at the point of transfer. (This is intended to provide lead-acid battery retailers with a means of recycling the spent batteries.)

More Information

Your metropolitan county and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency have staff available to answer waste management questions. For more information, contact your metropolitan

county hazardous waste office or the MPCA office closest to your county.

Metro County Hazardous Waste Offices	
Anoka County	(763) 422-7093
Carver County	(952) 361-1800
Dakota County	(952) 891-7020
Hennepin County	(612) 348-8100
Ramsey County	(651) 773-4466
Scott County	(952) 496-8177
Washington County	(651) 430-6655
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	
Toll free	(800) 657-3864
Brainerd	(218) 828-2492
Detroit Lakes	(218) 847-1519
Duluth	(218) 723-4660
Marshall	(507) 537-7146
Rochester	(507) 285-7343
St. Paul	(651) 297-2274
Willmar	(320) 214-3786
Web Site	http://www.pca.state.mn.us