

First National Battery brings recycling in-house

First National Battery, a subsidiary of JSE-listed Metair Investments, and a manufacturer and distributor of lead acid batteries in South Africa, has commissioned a polypropylene recycling plant at its Benoni factory.



Managing director at First National Battery, Dr Louis Denner says, "Automotive battery components, which include lead, plastic and acid are harmful to our ecology if they are not properly treated. Fortunately, most the components of these batteries are well suited to recycling."

"Recycling is an extremely important consideration for us, not only for the recovery of valuable materials but also in terms of environmental protection," says Denner, adding that the manufacturing of lead acid batteries in SA is dependent on the recycling of both lead and polypropylene. "In fact more than 90% of all lead acid batteries sold in South Africa are recycled."

"While our lead smelter has been producing quality alloys for more than 14 years, the establishment of the polypropylene recycling plant essentially completes the vertical integration of our battery production processes," says Denner. Polypropylene is used to manufacture battery cases, lids and other component

The recycling process

The recycling process begins with the breaking-down of the old battery and the recovery of lead and polypropylene. The lead is smelted while the polypropylene is converted into granules, washed, dried and pelletised.

The polypropylene pellets are bulk-shipped to First National Battery's plastics factory in Fort Jackson, near East London, where they are combined with a specific ratio of virgin material in order to ensure sufficient tensile strength.

By becoming fully vertically integrated, First National Battery is able to oversee the entire process - from the recycling of old batteries, to the recovery of materials, the production of new plastic components and high-quality lead alloys, to the assembly and distribution of new lead acid batteries.

"This ensures tight controls are consistently implemented to guarantee the highest quality products are manufactured using the best raw materials available," concludes Denner.

For more information, go to www.battery.co.za.