

Press release

17 December 2004

Umicore wins environment award for its battery recycling technology

Umicore has won the European Environmental Press (EEP) Association's Gold Award 2004. The prize was announced at the Pollutec environmental trade show held recently in Lyon, France and was attributed in collaboration with the European Federation of Associations of Environmental Professionals (EFAEP).

Umicore was nominated for the prize as a result of its groundbreaking technology in the recycling of lithium-ion rechargeable batteries. Until now it has not been possible to recycle these batteries in an environmentally sound way. Umicore has developed a process called VAL'EAST™ which involves no pre-processing, produces no hazardous waste and which has a high recovery rate.

Lithium-ion is the main technology being used to power portable electronic equipment such as mobile phones and laptop computers. Currently around 9,000 tonnes of cobalt is sold each year to make some 1.4 billion cells. These numbers are set to grow in the future as are the volumes of used equipment and batteries that need recycling.

In addition to the environmental benefits, there are also commercial benefits for Umicore. As the world's leading supplier of cobalt compounds for rechargeable batteries, Umicore will be able to re-use the materials recovered from this process in new rechargeable batteries.

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PROFILE

Umicore is an international metals and materials group. Its activities are centred on five business areas : Precious Metals Services, Precious Metals Products and Catalysts, Advanced Materials, Zinc and Copper. Each business area is divided into market-focused business units.

Umicore focuses on application areas where it knows its expertise in materials science, chemistry and metallurgy can make a real difference, be it in products that are essential to everyday life or those at the cutting edge of exciting, new technological developments.

Umicore's overriding goal of sustainable value creation is based on this ambition to develop, produce and recycle metals in a way that fulfils its mission: materials for a better life.

The Umicore Group has industrial operations on all continents and serves a global customer base; it generated a turnover of EUR 4.7 billion in 2003 and currently employs some 11,500 people.

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