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# Energizer debuts recycled AA and AAA batteries



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This Monday, Feb. 2, 2015 photo shows examples of new Energizer EcoAdvanced batteries, at the company's headquarters in St. Louis. Energizer EcoAdvanced is expected in stores this

the company's headquarters in St. Louis. Energizer EcoAdvanced is expected in stores this week and are being touted as the first AA and AAA batteries made in part from recycled batteries. (Jeff Roberson/Associated Press)

By Associated Press February 3

ST. LOUIS — Billions of discarded household batteries make their way into landfills every year and now one of the nation's largest battery makers says it is putting some of them to good use.

Suburban St. Louis-based Energizer Holdings on Tuesday introduced Energizer EcoAdvanced, described as the first disposable AA and AAA alkaline batteries made with recycled batteries.

The recycled materials comprise about 4 percent of the weight of the new batteries, but the company is aiming for 40 percent by 2025, and hopes to eventually include other battery sizes.

Energizer EcoAdvanced is expected in stores nationwide this week and internationally later this year. An ad campaign featuring the Energizer Bunny is also planned.

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Michelle M. Atkinson, chief marketing officer and vice president for Energizer, said the new battery will last longer than any alkaline battery produced by the company, and will cost 25 to 30 percent more than standard batteries.

Atkinson said the inspiration began seven years ago during a trip by company executives to a battery recycling plant. Though the battery material was recycled for use such as road filler, there was no re-use for battery purposes.

“We stood there and said, ‘There has to be a better way,’” Atkinson recalled.

There was a time when discarded batteries were a significant environmental concern. A law passed in 1996 phased out the use of mercury in batteries. Today, household alkaline batteries are typically thrown out with other trash. Roughly 5 billion batteries are sold each year in the U.S., Atkinson said.

“There’s nothing harmful in batteries today but we know consumers want to know, ‘How do we avoid that waste?’” Atkinson said.

Recycling is common among some types of batteries — 96 percent of all lead-acid batteries are recycled, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. Those include automobile batteries. Meanwhile, a nonprofit called the Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corp. recycles four kinds of rechargeable batteries — nickel-cadmium, nickel metal hydride, lithium ion, and small-sealed lead.

Juli Niemann, an analyst for Smith Moore in suburban St. Louis, said alkaline battery sales have been declining as more products use rechargeable batteries and other power means.

“I think it’s trying to win points with the green crowd,” she said of EcoAdvanced.

But Scott Cassel, CEO of the Boston-based Product Stewardship Institute, said the benefits extend beyond reducing the number of batteries in landfills.

“By creating the market for the recycled materials, it decreases the need to mine new materials, and mining is a big contributor to greenhouse gas, which contributes to climate change,” Cassel said.

Duracell, Energizer’s chief competitor and the world’s largest battery-maker, has taken several environmentally friendly steps, spokesman Win Sakdinan said. The company is involved in battery recycling and uses recycled materials in packaging, displays and boxes. It has worked to reduce air pollution, water consumption and solid waste at manufacturing plants.

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“We look at impacts across the full life cycle,” Sakdinan said.

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