MINUTES: 16th Battery Industry Trilateral Working Group Meeting

PLACE OF MEETING: NEMA Headquarters, Rosslyn, VA

DATE AND TIME: Thursday, June 16, 2011 0900 - 1600 EDT

PARTICIPANTS:

USA
Michelle Atkinson, Energizer
Michael Babiak, Energizer
Marc Boolish, Energizer
Charles Monahan, Panasonic
Kevin Domack, Rayovac (by phone)
Mark Kohorst, NEMA
Sarah Owen, NEMA
Craig Updyke, NEMA
Andrei Moldoveanu, NEMA

EU
Pascal Franchet, Energizer
Hans Craen, EPBA
Khush Marolia, Duracell
Wim Willems, Panasonic

Japan
Kensuke Nakatani, BAJ
Kuniharu lizuka BAJ
Shinichiro Yabe, BAJ
Hiroki Kunugimoto, Panasonic
Akinori Awano, Panasonic
Mitsonuri Takao, Sanyo
Akio Furukawa, Sanyo
Tadao Iekura, Hitachi Maxell Energy
Hirotaka Shima, Hitachi Maxell Energy

Observers
John Bailie, Electrical Equipment Manufacturers Association of Canada
George Kerchner, PRBA, The Rechargeable Battery Association
Jean-Pol Wiaux, ReCharge

1. Opening of Meeting
Mr. Babiak welcomed the participants and called the meeting to order at 0900.

2. Attendance, Apologies for Absence, Membership

Attendees introduced themselves and Mr. Babiak noted several absentees and acknowledged guest participants from ReCharge, PRBA, and EEMAC.

3. Approval of Agenda

Attendees approved the agenda with no changes. Mr. Babiak noted that he intended the agenda to be flexible and that extended discussion on topics of particular interest would be accommodated.

4. Approval of Minutes from 09/14/2010 in Brussels

The minutes from the 15th TWG meeting were approved without modification.

5. Review of Action Items

Each action item from the 2010 TWG meeting in Brussels was reviewed and discussed.

   a. Supply chain, environmental impacts – For this action item, each association was to assess internally if there is a need for asking suppliers for data related to environmental impact of their products and activities. Mr. Craen noted that EPBA has conducted this analysis in the course of preparing its Sustainability Report. The effort will continue and lead to a recommendation for other TWG members. The group agreed to monitor the issue and await EPBA’s completed analysis and recommendation.
   
   b. EPBA Sustainability Report – completed
   
   c. Global Web site on sustainability issues – This item is still under consideration
   
   d. Battery selection document – This item was not completed since the last TWG meeting. After discussion, the group decided that a document informing consumers of which batteries to use for particular applications would have value under the “broad umbrella” of sustainability activities. It was agreed that EPBA would develop a draft document on the best choice of battery for various applications, incorporating work already done by BAJ. The principal focus will be primary batteries, but some attention to rechargeable batteries would be helpful.
   
   e. Quarterly conference calls – Mr. Kohorst noted that these calls were taking place, largely through the continued vigilance of EPBA. The group agreed the calls should continue to provide a regular forum for the exchange of information.
   
   f. Mercury in button cells paper – This effort was intended to produce a joint paper on the use of mercury in button cells. Mr. Kohorst reported that he had prepared a draft for comment by NEMA members, but due to policy disagreements among the group it had not proceeded further. The group agreed that the item should be carried and a draft version of the paper should be issued and circulated for review.
   
   g. EPBA Safety Guidelines – Mr. Craen reported that this item was completed and the Safety Guidelines are available on the EPBA web site. Mr. Kohorst went to that site and to similar information on the BAJ web site and projected it on-screen for the group to review.
   
   h. Global data base, one-stop web shopping – This action was still under consideration and had been discussed during the quarterly conference calls. The group decided that an
accessible web site to house technical reports and other documents was needed to ensure interested parties had access to “state of the art” information on the industry. EPBA will take the lead on developing this site.

i. Trade association charts – Mr. Boolish provided a presentation on the current status of battery industry associations worldwide. Information on contacts remains missing for several countries such as Taiwan and newly forming associations in Latin America. Mr. Boolish and Mr. Marolia will pursue this information and report back to the group. It was noted that a Korean battery association was in formation – BAJ will provide contacts for that organization.

6. Association Updates

BAJ, EPBA, and NEMA provided presentations on priority activities and developments in each area.

a. BAJ - Mr. Iekura reported on the Japan Portable Rechargeable Battery Recycling Center (JBRC), which was founded in 2001 and is collecting a high percentage of all forms of rechargeable batteries. It is funded by battery manufacturers and appliance manufacturers and has 283 members. Mr. Kunugimoto, Chairman of BAJ’s Button Battery Collection Committee, followed with a presentation on button cell collection and mercury reduction activities in Japan. He reported that the percentage of Hg-free AgOx batteries in the waste stream has doubled from 2009-2010. This is mainly the result of a new collection scheme involving collection cans to replace previously used boxes. Note: Button cell battery collection in Japan is voluntary.

b. EPBA – Mr. Craen provided the update for the EU delegation, covering four topic areas in his presentation: EPBA’s Sustainability Report, sustainability at end-of-life, mercury in button cells, and the Nordic Swan eco-labeling scheme. He reported that EPBA has hired the consulting firm ERM to examine 1) obstacles to the use of metals recovered from used batteries in production of new batteries, and 2) the best processing technology for recycling alkaline batteries. He also outlined the requirements of the Nordic Swan labeling scheme in the Nordic countries for both primary and rechargeable batteries.

c. USA – Mr. Babiak began the US update by noting that all information and reports concerning primary batteries would be covered in other presentations during the day. Mr. Kerchner then described the status and developments of the US DOT rulemaking on lithium battery transport, noting that the industry must realize that “the days of shipping large consignments of lithium batteries under the exceptions traditionally allowed in passenger or cargo aircraft are coming to an end.”

7. Lithium Coin Cell Ingestions

Mr. Boolish offered a presentation on the button and coin cell ingestion hazard, providing a comprehensive review of the issue encompassing standards activities, actions by CPSC, and Federal legislation recently introduced in the US House of Representatives. Both he and Mr. Babiak stressed the severity of the issue and reviewed the actions NEMA has taken or plans to take to address it in the US. BAJ presented slides indicating that it was a serious issue in Japan in the 1980s, but the industry addressed it effectively and interest has largely subsided.
ACTION: NEMA to distribute copies of the letter that 03DB section members provided to their customer organizations alerting them to the hazard and recommending mitigation efforts.

8. Lithium Transport Regulations

This topic was addressed earlier by Mr. Kerchner and Mr. Monahan.

9. Capacity Marking

Mr. Craen presented slides concerning the EU Commission’s mandate to European standardization bodies to study the feasibility of standardizing methods of measuring battery capacity. The mandate is expected to take effect July 1, 2011. Mr. Wiaux provided additional information. The essential take-away from the presentations was that the industry ultimately will be following an established approach for rechargeable batteries, while the issue will be more problematic and ambiguous for primary batteries.

10. Mercury in Button Cells

Mr. Kohorst summarized the current laws and proposed legislative changes regarding the phase out of mercury-added button cells in the US. Maine, Connecticut, and Rhode Island all are amending their laws in ways that will affect the phase out schedule in those states.

ACTION: Mr. Kohorst to distribute summary chart of changing Hg button battery laws in US States.

11. Life Cycle Analysis

Mr. Kohorst followed with a slide presentation covering the status of the NEMA LCA on end-of-life management of alkaline batteries. The report is now complete and has undergone peer review. Mr. Kohorst reviewed some of the principal findings of the study, noting that they constitute the basis of NEMA’s decision to develop and launch a nationwide battery recycling system.

12. Battery Summit

During the lunch break, Mr. Boolish briefed the group on the NEMA Battery Stakeholder Summit that took place in Dallas, TX in April. More than 75 attendees representing a wide range of stakeholder groups attended the summit, which produced an overall agreement concerning the elements and timeline for a national EoL solution for alkaline batteries.


NEMA members described their engagement in the 2011 legislative process with regard to SB 515 in California, which would have imposed a primary battery recycling mandate on manufacturers. NEMA negotiated extensively with the bill’s sponsor and other supporters but could not reach a mutually agreeable compromise. The bill ultimately failed to advance.

14. Battery Sort Data
Mr. Boolish reviewed NEMA’s “battery sort” activities since the last TWG meeting, noting that data gathered from events in CA and FL provided additional evidence that the amount of mercury in waste batteries continues to approach zero, as expected.

15. EU Collection Rates

Mr. Craen reviewed the latest data concerning battery collection rates in the EU states, noting that a significant number of EU member states are not expected to achieve the 25% collection rate mandated in the Battery Directive for 2012. Meanwhile the EPBA has begun advising EU authorities early that the 2012 target of 45% are also unlikely to be reached.

16. Canadian Regulatory Review

Guest participant John Bailie reviewed the regulatory situation in the Canadian provinces. He reported that the recycling rate targets and associated penalties for failure to achieve them are the most pressing problem facing the industry in Canada. Meanwhile Mr. Kerchner added that PRBA has been monitoring efforts by Environment Canada and Transport Canada to classify all alkaline batteries as Class 8 materials for corrosivity.

17. Latin America and Australia

Ms. Atkinson briefed the group on discussions she and Mr. Babiak had during a recent trip to Australia concerning recycling activity in that area, noting that collection activity is increasing, largely driven by a local recycler. She also provided additional information on Latin American associations under development.

18. International Associations

Members discussed the prospect of having other international associations (e.g., India, Latin America) attend future TWG meetings. Participants agreed on a process whereby the host country would make recommendations as to which outside organizations should be invited, but agreement from the full TWG would be needed before formal invitations would be issued.

19. Open Discussion

Members engaged in open discussion at the completion of formal presentations.

20. Date and Place of Next Meeting

The 17th TWG meeting will take place in Japan in late 2012, exact date and location to be determined.