Written by MARK JAEGER
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Business owner says reconditioning batteries saves money, reduces waste

After more than a dozen years running a home-repair business, Belgium resident Larry Folz knew it was time for a change.

“In today’s economy, there are a lot more people who have gotten into the home-repair business than when I started Larry’s Home Repair,” Folz said.

With such intense competition there are fewer costumers, yet expenses such as liability insurance continue to soar.

“While looking around on the Internet, I came across a site on how to refresh batteries in cordless tools. Being in the home-repair business, I have plenty of those laying around,” Folz said.

He researched the topic and came across a California company that talked about renewing auto batteries using chemicals and a special charging system.

He was admittedly skeptical.

“This sounded like more of the craziness we see on the Internet,” Folz admitted.

After more study, he said he found merit in the science behind the claim. The process clears lead sulfate build-up from a battery’s lead plates. Folz said that build-up keeps batteries from accepting and holding a charge.

He contacted officials from Battery Doctors, a division of Pro-Tech International, and is now the first franchise holder in Wisconsin.

Folz said the initial supplies and equipment cost “about what you would pay for a good used car.”

Folz said he is convinced the potential payoff is significantly higher.

“The sky is the limit,” he said.

“This is definitely a green business, keeping lead-based batteries out of our landfills. But it is also an opportunity for auto owners and business customers to save money in difficult economic

times.”

The environmental impact of recycling batteries is especially appealing to him.

“I grew up with the idea that it wasn’t right to throw things away that could be reused, keeping what you can out of the landfill, and in the last 10 years people have become a lot more concerned about that kind of thing.”

Folz said he has been told about 75% of existing lead batteries can be reconditioned by the process at a price that is half the cost of a new car battery.

“In the case of electric forklifts that use batteries that can cost as much as $5,000, the potential for saving is even greater because those batteries can be reconditioned for about $1,000, ” he said.

Folz said he will be approaching companies that use a lot of battery-powered equipment, as well as farmers and boaters.

“I know a lot of people are going to be skeptical. To prove how well the system works, I am willing to offer a free demonstration reconditioning to business customers on the first battery and a one-year warranty,” he said.

Folz said his brother uses a battery-powered golf cart, and could have been a likely customer.

“He spent $800 on a new battery. I told him I could have reconditioned his old battery for next to nothing,” Folz said.

Although he plans to start small, he said he sees the potential for the battery business to grow quickly.

“I have a lot of friends who are out of work who I think would be good for this kind of business,” Folz said.

For now, he is operating the business out of a rural Belgium garage.

Folz can be reached at 689-7778.

Image Information: BELGIUM RESIDENT Larry Folz uses a chemical additive and a specially designed charger to give new life to old lead batteries. Photos by Mark Jaeger