Motor Trade Association of SA

Environmental Fact Sheet

Lead Acid Batteries

Why are lead acid batteries a risk to the environment?

Lead acid batteries include car batteries and uninterruptible power supply UPS batteries for "protecting" personal computers.

Batteries contain lead, sulphuric acid, lead dioxide and lead sulphate all of which are classified as hazardous materials and can be harmful to the environment.

As a battery ages the plastic casing becomes brittle and is a higher spill risk.
At the end of a batteries life within it there is less than 10% sulphuric acid mixed with 90% water.
Hydrogen gas can accumulate to explosive levels with in the battery and other hazardous substances such as lead sulphate also build up.
The hazardous substances associated with batteries could leak into the environment and do harm and thus need to be stored and disposed of appropriately.
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Safe storage

To minimise the risk of storm water pollution or site contamination used batteries waiting for disposal should be stored in an area that is bunded, undercover and on sealed ground.
Self bunded pallets are ideal for this purpose.

Disposal

It is against the law to dispose of lead acid batteries to landfill or to dispose of them through incineration.
If you are disposing of batteries it is your responsibility to ensure that they are disposed of correctly.
Ensure that batteries are directed to a facility that can either recycle the battery components or transport the battery in a safe manner to a facility that can.

Any questions call the MTA

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