

Bruce Fader

What is the outlook for the coming year for lead-acid batteries? When Bob Ziegfeld suggested we look ahead to the coming year in our talks, I'm sure he didn't mean that we were to compete with the experts you'll be hearing on this program by making market forecasts. But, at the same time, it is part of our job to feel out the possibilities for marketing and promotion and make sure that your advertising, promotion, and technical service dollars are spent where they will do the most good. In the case of batteries, there are two markets which we continue to watch and promote.

The first of these, battery vehicles, continues to grow steadily though it hasn't yet achieved some of the spectacular new ground we hope to see it conquer. The growth has been mainly in the field of conventional industrial trucks and in golf carts and their industrial cousins, the personnel carriers. The spectacular market lies in street delivery trucks and it is our feeling that we're close to breaking into this big field.

You've seen samples of the current advertising aimed at these markets and you'll note that our publications continue to hammer away at the advantages of battery power. In addition, we are now meeting regularly with the Material Handling Institute and we have a mailing campaign to several hundred electric utilities to enlist their support in selling the idea. As a result of these programs, we placed 35,000 pieces of literature in the hands of people who requested them during the year just past and we expect to do a comparable job this year.

The second big new battery market we're watching lies in battery powered tools and appliances. It has been given a big push in the right direction by the two sealed cells you can see on display at this meeting. In effect, these do everything that nickel-cadmium batteries can do at less than half the cost.

Our publication, "The Picture Book of Power Batteries," was intended to interest two kinds of people -- potential users of batteries and product design people. This latter group, we feel, are the main targets for now in exploiting the sealed cell. The "Picture Book" and our advertising continue to produce tantalizing inquiries -- battery powered bicycles and toys, battery powered picnic refrigerators, among others -- and we hope that it will not be too long before some of this thinking materializes into real products.

I wish it were possible to picture the outlook for lead in sound and vibration control in as neat a package as batteries. It is not. Mr. Taylor will tell you of his experiences in evaluating lead for noise control in his talk later and I shall leave it to him to picture the "Alice in Wonderland" aspects of the field. You may remember one of the illustrations of that book -- Innocent Alice playing croquet with a flamingo for a mallet and a hedgehog for a ball. Substitute a noise generator for the flamingo and a recalcitrant noise reduction curve for the hedgehog and you have a fair idea of what it feels like to go through some of the tests that we have made together. Suffice it to say that in a time study of acoustical evaluation work, a good deal of the total effort would have to be entered under the category of "head scratching" or wondering why.

Still, we continue to receive inquiries and we attempt to disseminate honest technical information and samples. We have placed articles on actual case histories we've had a hand in and we will continue to publicize the work we've done. One of these will appear shortly in American City magazine and another is available as a reprint of a recent paper before SAE in Detroit.

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We are by no means abandoning lead for architectural use as Mr. Taylor will tell you. But since he will be looking at this field in some detail, I'd like to close by exploring one of the other market possibilities. Lead loaded damping compounds remain a difficult-to-estimate but definitely interesting market. The Morad base being built in Denver used about 30 tons of damping compounds and leaded compounds were bid for the job and lost -- principally, I feel, because not enough was known about them to achieve the best performance per dollar. On the other hand, one large air conditioning equipment manufacturer continues to order substantial quantities of these materials several times a year and we know of their use in office equipment, military equipment and other places that suggest big original equipment potential. If you happen to be riding one of the passenger cars of the Southern Railway sometime soon, and notice that it seems unusually quiet, you can be pretty sure that five tons of lead-loaded damping compound have been trowelled onto the structural deck under your feet. This is a pilot effort by Southern Railway and plans call for as many as fifty passenger cars to be so treated if they are satisfied with the results.