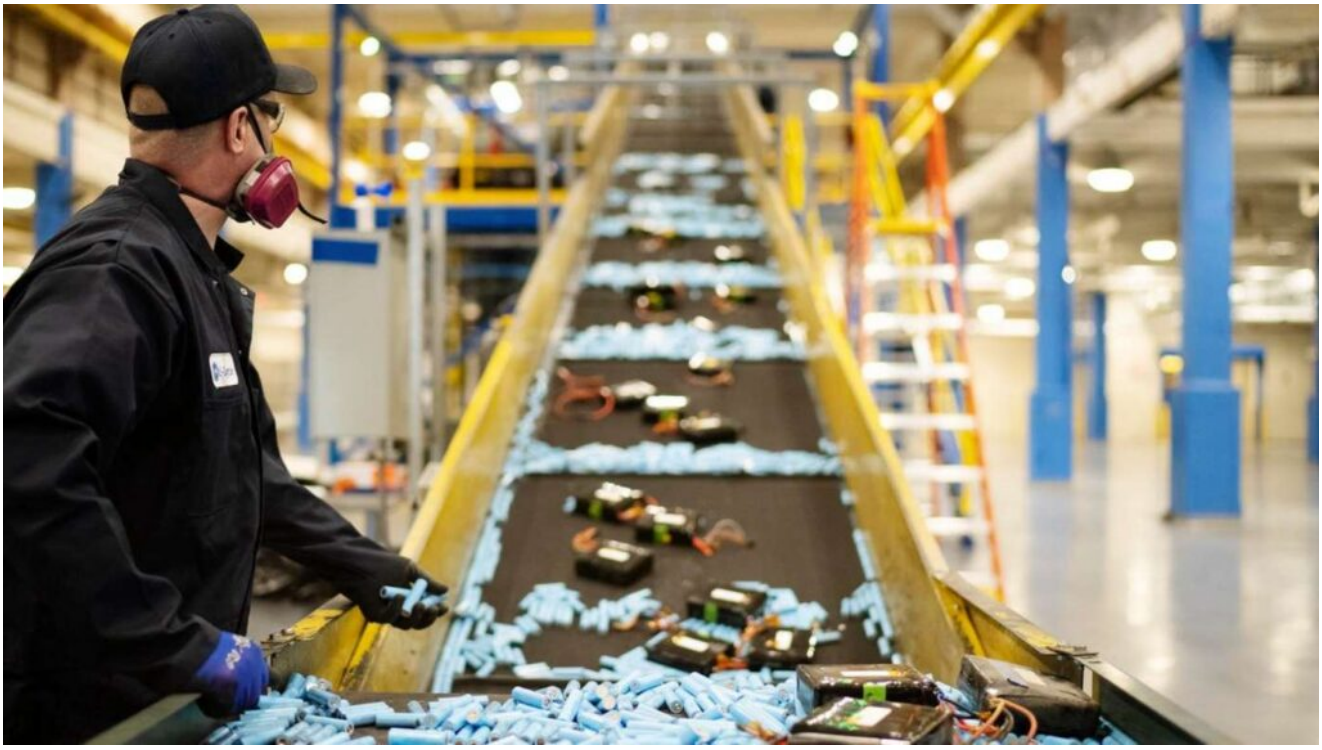
LIFE HACKS

New Tech Is Helping Recycle Tons of Lithium-Ion Batteries in the US & Canada

By bestfolkmedicine · 04/01/2022 · 2 min read



When it's completed in the near future, the $175 million worth plant in Rochester, N.Y. being built by Li-Cycle, a Canadian firm, will be the biggest plant for lithium-ion battery recycling in North America.

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This plant will have a capacity of 25 metric kilotons of material and will recover 95 percent or more of nickel, lithium, cobalt, and other crucial elements through their zero-emissions and zero-wastewater process.

According to the co-founder and CEO of the company, Ajay Kochhar, they'll be one of the biggest domestic sources of lithium and nickel and the sole source of cobalt.

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Preventing Lithium-Ion Batteries from Ending Up in Landfills

The company which was founded in 2016 is part of the growing industry that's focused on averting tens of thousands of tons of lithium-ion batteries from landfills.

In 2019, of the 180,000 metric tons of these batteries for recycling, a bit more than a half were recycled. With lithium-ion battery production increasing, so will the interest in recycling processes.

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The London-based Circular Energy Storage, a consultancy that tracks the recycling market of lithium-ion batteries, notes that some hundred companies globally recycle these batteries or are planning to do it in the near future.

It's focused mostly in South Korea and China where most batteries are also made; however, there are startups in Europe and North America too. These startups will automate, streamline, and clean what's been until now a dirty, inefficient, and intensive process.

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It Has to Be Profitable & Cleaner Battery Recycling

Jeff Spangenberger, the director of ReCell Center, a battery-recycling research collaboration, the recycling of batteries doesn't only need to be cleaner, but also profitable.

It's better than mining new materials and dumping the batteries away. However, recycling companies are struggling to make a profit.

This is why the industry needs to be made cost-effective in order for people to have the motivation to bring back their batteries.

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Li-Cycle will work on a “spoke and hub” model. The spokes handle the processing of old batteries and battery scraps whereas the black mass goes into a central hub and is processed into battery-grade materials.

The engineers have bettered the traditional hydrometallurgical recycling; instead of dismantling an EV battery pack into cells that are then discharged, they now divide the pack into bigger modules and process them without any discharging.

Lithium-ion batteries last for a long time and thirty percent of the used EVs of the US market are in Jordan, Ukraine, and Russia. Estimates note that the US will have around 80 metric kilotons of Li-ion batteries for recycling in 2030 whereas Europe will have 132 kilotons.

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