

Norway supermarket chain pioneers battery recycling machines

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Norway's second-largest supermarket chain said Tuesday it has introduced reverse vending machines that give customers discount coupons for new batteries when they deposit old ones for recycling.

Coop Norway believes the Swedish-made machines are the world's first for batteries, company spokesman Harald Kristiansen said. Just under 2,500 batteries have been collected in the three weeks since they were installed at three stores.

Customers receive a discount of 1 krone (\$ 0.12) for every returned battery.

The technology allows customers "to return all types of household batteries in a similar way as a reverse vending machine for bottles," Refind chief executive Johanna Reimers, whose company created the new machines.

Coop is testing the machines for now. It's unclear if the company will keep them and expand their use to other stores unless Norway adopts a law requiring vendors to take back used batteries, Kristensen said.

"When this is in place, Coop will be happy to put machines in place in its stores," he added.

Battery recycling is mandatory in Norway. About 2,000 tons of batteries are used in the country each year, most collected as special waste,

according to Kristiansen.

However, a survey commissioned by Coop showed that as many as 26 percent of the supermarket's customers tossed used batteries in their household trash.

"We are very happy with working on something that inspires and motivates people to recycle more batteries," said Reimers, whose company specializes in battery identification technology and handling discarded batteries.

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