

Battcon 2002 – A Perspective

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If you were not at the Sixth Annual International Battery Conference, Battcon 2002, in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, then you missed the most important battery users conference of the year. The conference opened on April 29 and ran non-stop through May 1, 2002 with nearly 400 attendees from eight countries and from all over the United States. Topics covered ranged from the analysis of currently operating battery systems, new methods of battery system management, ways to properly manage (not mismanage) battery systems, installation of large-scale battery systems, monitoring, and maintenance, to mention only some of the well covered topics.

Twenty technical papers were presented in seven sessions, each followed by a dynamic question and answer period. Interspersed among the technical sessions were five panel sessions where battery experts, both manufacturers and end-users, responded to attendee questions, many of which were somewhat controversial in nature. Although topics are sometimes confrontational, the expectation of resolving these issues has become the hallmark of every preceding Battcon. And this Battcon was no different. The attendees were not disappointed as topics concerning the life expectancy of valve regulated lead-acid batteries and the importance of maintenance (or lack thereof) to battery systems were thoroughly discussed.

A new location and expanded trade show helped make Battcon 2002 the most successful Battcon yet. Attendance this year was 385, up from last year's 363, which is impressive, considering the economic situation of late 2001. The expanded trade show prompted increased vendor participation: Battcon 2002 had 42 vendors, compared to 31 in 2001. The conference welcomed 46% first-time attendees as well as 9% who have attended all six conferences.

A two-hour seminar addressed battery sizing, applications, and testing, topics of very high interest to the attendees. The level of interest was obvious as a majority of Battcon participants attended the seminar and did not spend the afternoon on the beach. This same attentiveness was observed throughout the conference, even up to the last hour general discussion panel session, which covered many of the questions that could not be addressed during the regularly scheduled presentations and panels.

Battcon focuses on the end user and gathers a group of experienced manufacturers and system-oriented users, some with seemingly insurmountable battery problems, and some with apparent solutions to these same problems. The conference brings these battery users together at one location where all can share experiences and expertise. Everyone we spoke with, at one time or another said they learned something new and useful at this Battcon. Even the experts and near experts take something useful away from the interactions of this diverse group. In fact, 97% of attendees indicated the conference met or exceeded their expectations.

Activities for Battcon 2003 are already underway. Plans are to reconvene the battery users and manufacturers in Ft. Lauderdale in early April 2003. The Call-For-Papers is already out and available on the www.battcon.com website. If the enthusiasm shown by this year's Battcon 2002 attendees is any indication of how well this conference meets the expectations of the attendees, we can expect Battcon 2003 to be another top-notch conference.

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