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FORT WAYNE, Ind. - The Allen County Department of Environmental Management (ACDEM) and Purdue University Fort Wayne have secured a $1.7 million grant from the U.S. Department of Energy, placing them at the forefront of national battery recycling initiatives.

This funding, part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, positions Allen County among seven select communities nationwide to benefit from these resources. The grant aims to enhance battery recycling efforts, public education, and safety awareness.

The Allen County Board of Commissioners highlighted the ACDEM"s proactive approach, noting their efforts have already kept hundreds of tons of waste out of landfills while preserving the region"s natural resources.

The importance of battery recycling extends beyond environmental conservation. Lithium-ion batteries, ubiquitous in modern life, pose serious safety risks when disposed of improperly. Fires caused by these batteries have become a growing concern for waste management facilities and emergency responders.

By promoting public awareness, improving recycling infrastructure, and providing specialized training, Allen County"s initiative offers a blueprint for addressing these challenges comprehensively.

The program will soon roll out its educational resources, community outreach, and specialized training sessions to ensure that residents and professionals alike are equipped to safely handle and recycle batteries.

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Assembly of the project took about four months with the plant being integrated into an existing building. The ramp-up has been completed and Erlos, a subsidiary of WP Holding, is currently generating throughput of one tonne per hour, enabling the Saxony company to provide services to customers.

Served by the URT line, Erlos is now in fully automatic operation. A key advantage of the thermomechanical process is the preservation of lithium in the black mass. Black mass contains valuable metals such as cobalt, nickel and lithium and the URT technology enables over 98% of the dry black mass to be recovered.

Acting partner Peter Hessler emphasises successful cooperation with Erlos with technology being the main focus. "This results in very open and honest communication," he says. "The exchange of material analysis helps us to further optimise process parameters. Erlos is very experienced in battery recycling, which allows us to project at a high level and discuss details."

The advantage of the German plant manufacturer can be found in its comprehensive expertise. By engineering and supplying turnkey plants, URT offers complete plant concepts. It is the exclusive point of contact, which helps to avoid interface problems. Together with trusted suppliers, URT develops and refines new techniques and technologies to ensure that application units are constantly optimised.

"Despite the challenges that such a project entails, all topics were clearly addressed collaboratively, and work was always solution-oriented. The plant technology meets the expectations of Erlos and all stakeholders in terms of both operation and performance. With this technology, we are prepared for the increasing challenges of recycling."

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