

Brussels, September 27, 2012 – 12:00

SOLVAY LAUNCHES ITS RARE EARTH RECYCLING ACTIVITY IN FRANCE

Investment worth more than fifteen million euros to recycle rare earths from the “urban mine”

Today, Solvay is officially opening two rare earth recycling units in France. In order to diversify its sources of supply and preserve resources, the Group has developed a process for recovering rare earths contained in end-of-life equipment such as low-energy light bulbs, batteries or magnets. This original recycling channel derived from the Group's research programs opens up new growth opportunities for Solvay's "Rare Earths" activity.

First launched in 2007, this project required two years of research and development followed by two years of industrialization studies and site selection. The investment was officially approved in 2011. The Group decided to focus initially on low-energy light bulbs because the recovery channels already exist. These light bulbs are rich in six different rare earths – lanthanum, cerium, terbium, yttrium, europium and gadolinium – which Solvay is now in a position to recycle while preserving 100% of their functional properties.

Used light bulbs are collected, sorted and processed by specialized companies who recycle their different components (glass, metals, plastics, mercury). The luminescent powders are shipped to the Group's facilities: to Saint-Fons (Rhône-Alpes, France) first of all, where the rare earth concentrate is extracted and subsequently to La Rochelle (Charente Maritime, France), a plant that boasts unique expertise in separation technology unparalleled in Europe. Once the rare earths have been separated, they are then reformulated into luminescent precursors that will be reused in the manufacture of new lamps.

“Used in small quantities, rare earths play the role of ‘vitamins’ vital for the continuing development of new technologies, especially green technologies. Global demand for rare earths is growing at more than 6% per year, making these elements a strategic raw material. Recycling allows us to develop a new source of supply, and we aim to become the benchmark European player in this area,” explains Du Hua, Director of Solvay's Rare Earths Systems business unit. *“The launch of these units illustrates our tangible contribution as a chemical manufacturer to sustainable development.”*

A world leader in rare earth-based formulations, Solvay develops a large number of innovations used in everyday applications (flat screens, low-energy light bulbs, automotive pollution control, high precision optics, etc.).

SOLVAY is an international chemical Group committed to sustainable development with a clear focus on innovation and operational excellence. It is realizing over 90% of its sales in markets where it is among the top 3 global leaders. Solvay offers a broad range of products that contribute to improving the quality of life and the performance of its customers in markets such as consumer goods, construction, automotive, energy, water and environment, and electronics. The Group is headquartered in Brussels, employs about 31,000 people in 55 countries and generated EUR 12.7 billion in net sales in 2011 (pro forma). Solvay SA ([SOLB.BE](#)) is listed on [NYSE Euronext](#) in Brussels and Paris (Bloomberg: [SOLB.BB](#) - Reuters: [SOLBt.BR](#)).

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