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Antaya gets the lead out of auto glass

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Antaya Technologies Corp. is getting the lead out.

The maker of electrical connectors for heated glass and on-glass antennas has joined forces with glass suppliers and automakers to reduce the amount of lead in vehicles.

Antaya, of Cranston, R.I., expects it can remove an estimated 100 tons of lead annually from vehicles. It is working with such glass companies as Mexico's Vitro SA de CV and Magna Donnelly, of Holland, Mich.

Cars and light trucks produced in the United States average at least four lead-based connectors used for on-board technologies. The connectors provide power for windshields, backlights and quarter windows, along with signals for radio, keyless entry and remote-start controllers.

Antaya and the glass makers aim to help General Motors switch to lead-free connectors and terminals. GM recently informed suppliers that lead must be removed from its connectors for vehicles produced

for the 2009 model year. This spring, Antaya plans to replace lead-filled connectors on several GM models.

Antaya still supplies lead-filled connectors for vehicles manufactured by American Honda Motor Co., BMW, Nissan Motor Co. and Toyota Motor Corp.

The use of lead poses health and safety issues in manufacturing and environmental concerns during end-of-life disposal.

Antaya began refining soldering procedures after Ford Motor Co. sought alternatives in the 1990s, says Elaine Catton, a spokeswoman for Antaya.

"Until recently, it was thought that a suitable alternative did not exist," Catton said.

"The technology has been used in several vehicles built by Ford, GM and Chrysler but never gained broader acceptance as it is slightly more expensive than lead.

"However, increased environmental awareness on the part of vehicle makers is causing them to revisit this technology." **AN**

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