

Whittier-based battery business getting charge from expansion

By Kevin Smith, Staff Writer

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WHITTIER - Larry Farnworth is bucking the trend.

While scores of other businesses are downsizing, cutting jobs or even going out of business, his company is expanding.

Farnworth, who has grown Interstate Batteries of Central Los Angeles in Whittier since 1982, is gearing up to open an adjacent retail/distribution operation.

The new division will complement his existing business of more traditional batteries with an expanded line of batteries for alarms, wheelchairs, hearing aids, emergency medical backup systems and just about anything else you could think of.

Farnworth has also changed the name of his business to Interstate All Battery Center of Central Los Angeles to better reflect his expanded offerings.

He even has a motto for his newly expanded enterprise.

"We have it, we find it or we build it," he said. "Let's say you brought in a power tool that's

battery powered. We'll be able to open up the case and re-install the batteries."

Farnworth's original 5,000-square-

foot office/warehouse building at 7227 Whittier Ave. has functioned largely as a distributorship.

"We work with major resellers," he said. "For most of the people we sell to, the label on the product will say Interstate Batteries. But we also do business with certain original equipment manufacturers like Honda and Toyota where they put their own label on it."

The business sells traditional batteries as well as other ones that still use lead and acid, but are dry batteries.

"They're more environmentally friendly," he said. "We're also entering into solar power to charge batteries that operate equipment. And when people have cadmium or lithium battery products its very difficult to get them recycled, but they can drop them off here and we bag them up, put them in a green box and ship them to a recycle center."

Founded in 1952 and based in Dallas, Interstate Batteries is a privately held group of corporations, which includes a company with 305 distributors that service more than 200,000 dealers throughout the United States, Canada and select international locations.

Interstate is the top-selling replacement automotive brand battery in North America,

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selling more than 15 million units a year.

Interstate All Battery Centers currently has more than 108 stores in 35 states, Canada and Puerto Rico.

"The strength of our business is based solidly on the fact that consumer demand for batteries continues to rise despite our economic state," said Interstate Batteries Franchise and Development Director Justin Darland.

"Replacement batteries for automobiles and forklifts to road signs and heart defibrillators meet critical consumer needs and remain unaffected by recession."

Farnworth agreed.

"If we were dealing with a fad product I'd be worried," he said. "But batteries are a central part of life. when you get down to it, there's not a part of our life that doesn't require batteries."

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