

Seattle bans throwing away batteries in garbage, citing fire risk

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Seattle Public Utilities has banned all batteries and some electronics from being disposed of in the garbage due to fire risk.

The ban includes small button and alkaline batteries, lithium-ion batteries used in [electric bikes](#) and vehicles, and items with batteries embedded in them. Electronic items like computers, monitors and TVs also cannot be thrown in the garbage.

The SPU Director's Rule took effect Jan. 1.

If not disposed of properly, the batteries and [electronics](#) risk catching fire.

Seattle Fire Department Chief Harold Scoggins said in a news release that the department has responded to 79 lithium-ion battery fires in the past two years.

"This is a growing fire safety concern across the nation as consumers purchase more items with [lithium-ion batteries](#)," Scoggins said. "Fires involving batteries can start and spread quickly, so properly storing, charging, and disposing of batteries becomes key to preventing fires where injuries and property loss could occur."

Batteries have [hazardous chemicals](#)—like lithium, cadmium, mercury and lead—that pose risks to people and the environment, and need special handling to be safely disposed of, the release said. Alkaline batteries also contain acids that corrode metals.

Those materials are also valuable, and can be reused and recycled, SPU General Manager and CEO Andrew Lee said in the release.

"Too often residents are confused about how to dispose of batteries—this new Director's Rule provides needed clarification to keep communities and our employees safe," said Mayor Bruce Harrell said.

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