

How to Safely Recycle Household Batteries

In California, household batteries must never be placed in the trash or curbside recycling bins. This includes regular alkaline batteries (like AA and AAA), rechargeable batteries, lithium batteries, and button batteries.

California regulates discarded household batteries as hazardous waste, generally under its universal waste rules. Batteries must be taken to an authorized battery collection or recycling facility or a household hazardous waste (HHW) collection site. The Responsible Battery Recycling Act holds the battery industry responsible for the collection, recycling, and proper end-of-life management of covered batteries. For more information, contact Batteries@calrecycle.ca.gov.

Where to Recycle Your Batteries

- **City or County HHW Facilities:** Most counties offer free drop-off locations or collection events for residents. Search online for "[your county] household hazardous waste" to find nearby facilities.
- **S.A.F.E. Centers:** S.A.F.E. stands for Solvents, Automotive, Flammables, and Electronics. These centers accept a variety of household hazardous waste materials, including batteries and electronic waste. Visit the Los Angeles [S.A.F.E. Centers website](#) or use the [Battery Collection Center map](#) to find a collection site near you.
- **The Battery Network:** Enter your ZIP code in the [Battery Network locator](#) to find participating battery recycling locations. Check which battery types each location accepts.
- **Earth911:** Visit Earth911.com to find recycling facilities for household batteries, electronics, and other recyclable materials.
- **Retail Store Collection Programs:** Some Home Depot, Lowe's, Best Buy, hardware stores, and other retailers offer battery recycling services. Accepted battery types vary by location. Contact the store before visiting.

How to Prepare Batteries for Recycling

1. **Cover Battery Terminals:** Use electrical tape or other nonconductive tape to cover the terminals of 9-volt, lithium, and rechargeable batteries. For button or coin batteries, cover both flat surfaces or place each battery in a separate plastic bag. This helps prevent short circuits and fires.
2. **Use a Safe Storage Container:** Store used batteries in a nonmetal container, such as a cardboard box or plastic container. Keep batteries separated or individually bagged to prevent their terminals from contacting one another or metal objects.
3. **Keep Batteries Cool and Dry:** Store batteries at room temperature, away from direct sunlight, heat sources, and flammable materials.
4. **Keep Batteries Away from Children and Pets:** Button batteries are especially dangerous if swallowed and can cause severe internal injuries. Keep them securely stored until recycling.

What to Do With Damaged, Leaking, or Swollen Batteries

Damaged lithium-ion batteries can overheat, ignite, or cause fires. Warning signs include swelling, leaking, excessive heat, unusual odors, hissing, or visible damage.

If you discover a damaged or swollen battery:

1. Stop Using It Immediately: Do not recharge, puncture, crush, or attempt to repair the battery.
2. Isolate the Battery if Safe: If the battery is cool and shows no signs of an imminent fire, keep it away from flammable materials. A suitable fire-resistant container with sand or unscented clay cat litter may provide temporary protection.
3. Contact Your Local HHW Program: Call ahead for special handling and disposal instructions. Not all collection sites accept damaged or defective lithium-ion batteries.
4. Follow Approved Disposal Instructions: Take the battery only to a collection facility that has confirmed it can safely accept damaged batteries. Do not place damaged batteries in ordinary retail battery recycling bins.

Important Fire Safety Warning

If a battery is smoking, sparking, hissing, or becoming dangerously hot, immediately leave the area and call 911.

Do not attempt to handle, move, or transport a battery that appears likely to catch fire. Keep others away and follow instructions from emergency responders.

Remember: Never put batteries in household trash or curbside recycling bins. Proper battery recycling protects our environment, prevents fires, and keeps sanitation workers and communities safe.