SKIP the BIN

TURN YOUR BATTERIES IN

A Guide for Local Governments

Effective Dec. 1, 2026, lithium-ion batteries are banned from landfills and incinerators.[1]

N.C. DEQ's Division of Environmental Assistance and Customer Service (DEACS) provides technical assistance, customizable outreach materials, and grant funding to help communities establish or enhance battery collection and hazardous waste programs.

Why Is There a Ban?

REDUCE FIRE RISK AND OTHER HAZARDS

Damaged or overheated lithium-ion batteries (LIBs) can explode, causing intense, fast-spreading fires that burn hotter and are more toxic than gasoline fires.

PROTECT PEOPLE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Mismanaged or damaged LIBs have caused hundreds of fires at waste and recycling facilities, endangering lives and causing millions of dollars in infrastructure damage.[2]

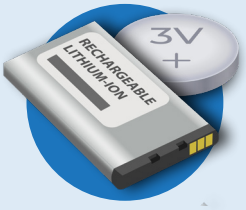
RECOVER CRITICAL MINERALS

Capturing LIBs reclaims lithium, cobalt, graphite, and nickel, reducing the need for extractive mining while fueling the circular economy.

Call to Action

- Set up lithium-ion battery collection sites.
- Educate residents on proper disposal and where LIBs are accepted.
- Protect employees, fleet, facilities, and the public from LIB fires with proper training and collection site management.
- Spread the message to never dispose of lithium-ion batteries in household trash or recycling bins.
- Contact DEACS for technical assistance, customizable outreach materials, and grant funding for battery collection programs.

Identifying Li-Ion Batteries



COMMONLY USED DEVICES:

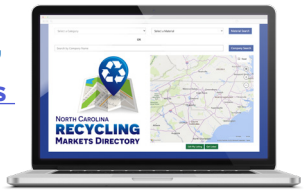
Lithium-ion batteries (LIBs) power many of the rechargeable devices we use every day. These batteries come in many sizes to power all types of devices from tiny hearing aids and smartwatches to large electric scooters, bikes, and cars. If a device is rechargeable, it is likely powered by a lithium-ion battery.

Damaged, defective, and recalled (DDR) batteries require special handling. Learn how to identify and properly handle a DDR battery through DOT's guidelines.[3]

Finding a Vendor

Check with multiple vendors to find a collection strategy that fits specific needs. Working with an existing electronics or household hazardous waste (HHW) vendor or setting up collection with a battery processor is often recommended.

Search "Batteries - Lithium" in the NC Recycling Markets Directory to find potential vendors.



Safe Storage and Handling

Take these steps to ensure the drop-off facility is safely storing lithium-ion batteries.

- Ask battery, electronics, or HHW vendors for best practices and requirements.
- Use nonconductive containers or insulated fireproof bags or boxes.
- Keep batteries in a cool and dry location, out of direct sunlight, and not exposed to extreme temperatures.
- Reach out to your battery recycler for guidance on proper handling of DDR batteries.
- Tape terminals.
- Check with your battery recycler to determine how to store batteries by chemistry type.
- Clearly label battery collection containers.

Setting Up a Collection

While lithium-ion and lead acid batteries are specifically banned from disposal, collection events should accept all types of batteries that residents will bring.

HOST A BATTERY COLLECTION EVENT or partner with other organizations or local governments to collect all types of batteries.

USE A MAIL-BACK PROGRAM for small amounts of batteries.

ACCEPT AT YOUR HHW PROGRAM Confirm with a vendor and advertise the HHW collections as battery drop-off points.

ESTABLISH A PERMANENT COLLECTION Make sure to incorporate appropriate fire prevention and suppression equipment and follow safe storage and handling guidelines.[4]

ADD COLLECTION POINTS at frequently visited government buildings (ex. libraries, town hall, fire stations) to make it convenient for residents.

Communications and Messaging

It is essential that local governments provide residents with information on how and where to drop off batteries in order to prevent disasters sparked by improper disposal.

- Partner with other entities in the community with a vested interest in fire safety.
- Direct residents to drop-off sites or retail take-back programs in the community or county.
- Warn residents not to remove embedded lithium-ion batteries from devices.
- Refrain from using the word "recycling" and instead use terms like "turn in" or "drop off" when it comes to batteries.

FOR MORE INFORMATION on setting up a collection program, procedures for safe storage and handling, or receiving outreach materials and grants, visit www.deq.nc.gov/batteries or email recycleright@deq.nc.gov.

[1] On Dec. 1, 2026, in accordance with G.S. 130A-309.10 lithium-ion batteries (LIBs) will be banned from landfill disposal and incineration.
[2] *Study finds rising risk of lithium-ion fires*, and *Vape fires cost waste, recycling sector $2.5B yearly*, Recycling Resource, Inc.
[3] *Understanding the Risks of Damaged, Defective, or Recalled (DDR) Lithium Batteries*, U.S. Department of Transportation.
[4] *Lithium Battery Guide for Shippers*, U.S Department of Transportation.

The N.C. Division of Environmental Assistance and Customer Service (DEACS) is a non-regulatory division of N.C. DEQ offering technical and financial assistance to businesses, manufacturers, local governments, institutions, economic developers, and citizens in environmental management. For questions, call 1-877-623-6748.