

REGIONAL COLUMN

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Sounding the alarm on the dangers of lithium-ion batteries

Lithium-ion batteries have become the fastest growing home fire risk in Western Australia according to the Department of Fire and Emergency Services.

In 2024, there was a fire caused by one of these batteries almost every second day, making it the worst year on record. These 166 fires caused injuries, destroyed homes and possessions, damaged rubbish trucks and ignited large bushfires.

This figure is extremely concerning to Consumer Protection's Product Safety team, who are urging people to only buy products containing lithium-ion batteries from reputable suppliers and to be cautious when purchasing these items from overseas or on second-hand marketplaces.

Consumers should look for a regulatory compliance mark, such as a tick inside a triangle, or go to ees.gov.au to check whether the charger is approved for use in Australia.

Reputable manufacturers have matched battery/charger combinations which includes a system to detect the state of charge and switch off when nearing full. Overcharged lithium-ion batteries have the potential to heat up and ignite so it's important to remove your device from the charger once fully charged.

Consumers should also avoid mixing and matching chargers, and only charge batteries on a hard surface in a cool, dry place and away from flammable materials like beds, lounges or carpet.

Worryingly, these batteries don't even need to be charging to catch fire if they are badly damaged, poorly manufactured or exposed to direct sunlight or excessive heat for long periods of time. A recent housefire in Perth's east was started by a remote-control toy car that wasn't on charge.

To check if an item in your house contains a lithium-ion battery, look for labels such as lithium ion, li-ion, li-po and lithium-polymer. E-rideables, power tools, laptops, toys, smartphones, electric vehicles and even electric toothbrushes and vapes are powered by these batteries. They are everywhere in your lives.

When it comes to e-rideables, charge them outside of the home and never leave them to charge overnight. Installing a smoke or heat alarm where these devices are charged could save your life.



Never put lithium-ion batteries in your household waste or recycling bin. Throwing batteries in the bin can cause rubbish and recycling trucks to catch fire and waste facilities to burn. This endangers the lives of workers and costs the ratepayers.

Instead take the batteries to the nearest battery drop-off point, which can be found at Recycle Right - recycleright.wa.gov.au.

If you see a battery ignite, call 000 immediately as these fires are extremely difficult to extinguish with water and battery contents may reignite or explode several days later. The toxic gases that are released from these batteries are also incredibly dangerous, so stay well away.

For more information on lithium-ion battery safety around the home visit productsafety.gov.au.