



July 6, 2020

The Honorable Bill Quirk
Chair of the Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials Committee
Legislative Office Building, 1020 N Street, Room 171
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Senate Bill 1156 Lithium-ion Batteries: Illegal Disposal and Fire Prevention – SUPPORT

Dear Chair Quirk:

We, the undersigned organizations, write in support of SB 1156, which would require CalRecycle to create a guidance document promoting the proper disposal of lithium-ion batteries, as well as require the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to develop a model protocol for lithium-ion battery fire detection, handling, and suppression for the solid waste industry.

According to Call2Recycle, California consumes 64 million lithium-ion (Li-ion) batteries every year.¹ Of this 64 million, it is estimated between 75 to 92% of these batteries are improperly disposed of. With the number of Li-ion batteries expected to double in the next seven years, the quantity of Li-ion batteries and products entering the waste stream will only increase.² This poses a very serious fire, health, and safety hazard to our waste industry.

When Li-ion batteries experience intense physical pressure – which is common in California’s waste processing system – the batteries can spark a fire or explode. Over 1,700 fires at MRFs in the US and Canada are caused by these batteries annually and this number is likely a low estimate, as many smaller fires go unreported.³

One of the most notable Li-ion battery-induced fires was at the Shoreway Environmental Center Materials Recovery Facility in San Carlos, which caused \$8.5 million in damages in 2016. The fire initially took 79 firefighters and close to 2.5 hours to extinguish. Additionally, the facility was forced to shut down for 90 days.

A guidance documents is an important first step to helping consumers understand the hazard of improperly disposing of these batteries. Ultimately, consumers will need to change their behaviors if we are going to significantly reduce the number of these

¹ Call2Recycle, (2016). *US Consumer Battery Sales & Available for Collection*.

² RRS, (2017). *South Bayside Waste Management Authority Lithium-Based Battery Assessment*.

³ Fogelman, R. (2018). *How Recycling Facilities Can Extinguish the Threat of Fire Outbreaks. Waste Today*.

batteries entering the waste stream. However, the state also needs comprehensive collection and recycling infrastructure to provide consumers ample opportunities to dispose of these batteries. Additionally, a consumer education campaign should be implemented to inform consumers of the location and how to access this infrastructure as well.

Without this infrastructure and a complete education campaign, a guidance document, while important, will only help so much in terms of encouraging consumers to properly dispose of these batteries in a safe manner. California needs a free, convenient, producer-funded battery collection program that serves the entire state and reduces the number of Li-ion batteries illegally entering the waste stream.

For these reasons, we support SB 1156.

Sincerely,

Joe La Mariana



Executive Director
Rethink Waste

Nick Lapis



Director of Advocacy
Californians Against Waste

Doug Kobold



Executive Director
California Product Stewardship Council

Eric Potashner



Vice President & Senior Director of
Strategic Affairs
Recology

Cc: The Honorable Bob Archuleta
The Honorable Members of the Senate Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials
Committee