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CONTACT (NEWMAN): Lizzie Cootsona, Lizzie.Cootsona@sen.ca.gov

CONTACT (IRWIN): Margaret Lie, Margaret.Lie@asm.ca.gov

Senator Newman and Assemblymember Irwin Introduce Legislation to Ensure Safe and Accessible Battery Disposal

Sacramento, Calif. — In an effort to ensure access to safe battery disposal and reduce fire risk, Senator Josh Newman and Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin introduced SB 1215 and AB 2440 today. These two mirrored bills, also known as The Responsible Battery Recycling Act, create a statewide collection and recycling program for consumer batteries and battery-embedded products.

Because of the hazardous metals and corrosive materials that batteries contain, California classifies batteries as hazardous waste and bans them from solid waste landfills. When improperly discarded, batteries pose serious fire, health and safety hazards that disrupt our waste stream and poison our environment.

“An estimated 75-92% of lithium-ion batteries are disposed of improperly,” said **Senator Josh Newman (D-Fullerton), author of SB 1215**. “The influx of these batteries into our waste stream has resulted in an alarming number of fires in our material recovery facilities, waste collection trucks, and landfills – fires that pose serious toxic threats to the health and safety of workers, firefighters and the surrounding community.”

According to a 2018 California Product Stewardship Council study, 20 of 26 materials recovery facilities surveyed experienced at least one fire during the previous two years. 65% of these fires were attributed to discarded batteries, with 40% of those batteries identified as Lithium-ion.

Californians need a convenient and efficient system for used battery collection and sorting, which will provide enhanced opportunities for the recycling and reuse of the valuable and finite minerals inside the batteries, reduce toxic environmental impacts and spur economic growth.

“Many Californians don’t realize that all batteries are hazardous waste; and that throwing batteries, and products embedded with batteries, in curbside waste bins poses a threat to recycling facilities and human life,” said **Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin (D-Thousand Oaks), author of AB 2440**. “With more of our everyday items running off of batteries, it is imperative that we take swift action to stamp out the risk of devastating fires at our waste facilities and safely allow recovery of the valuable minerals inside batteries.”

These pieces of legislation will replace the current, labyrinthine and unsafe process for battery disposal with a safe, convenient, and accessible system for consumers to safely dispose of depleted batteries. SB 1215 and AB 2440 require the producers of batteries and battery-embedded products sold in California to develop, finance, and implement this program in collaboration with CalRecycle to recover and recycle their products.

WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING

“The recent increase in improperly disposed batteries has caused a spate of catastrophic fires at recycling facilities, not to mention the waste of all the embedded energy and finite resources that go into making batteries,” said **Nick Lapis, Director of Advocacy for Californians Against Waste, a co-sponsor of the bills.** “By requiring manufacturers to take responsibility for recovering, redesigning, and recycling their products, SB 1215 and AB 2440 will reduce the environmental impact of producing and disposing of batteries, take a growing financial burden off ratepayers, and protect workers and communities from toxic fires.”

“Our recycling industry has seen significant challenges, especially over the past 4 or 5 years, not only related to COVID-19, but China’s National Sword/Blue Sky policies and the ever turbulent recycled commodities market,” said **Doug Kobold, Executive Director of the California Product Stewardship Council, a co-sponsor of the bills.** “Even the economic impacts from the great recession of 2008 & 2009 did not pose nearly the threat to the recycling industry that is posed by improperly disposed batteries, especially lithium batteries. Without convenient and effective collection programs for batteries, consumers will continue to dispose of them improperly. This legislation will bring about positive changes to our system, and will help to reduce the uptick in fire events occurring at landfills and material recovery facilities.”

“We collect over 26 tons of batteries each year in RethinkWaste’s region alone, and I fear every day an improperly disposed of battery could result in another catastrophic fire like the one we faced in 2016,” said **Joe LaMariana, Executive Director of RethinkWaste, a co-sponsor of the bills.** “SB 1215 and AB 2440 will protect our workers and infrastructure from the growing number of batteries and products entering the waste stream on a daily basis.”

To schedule an interview with Senator Newman, contact Lizzie Cootsona at 916.651.4526 and to schedule an interview with Assemblymember Irwin, contact Margaret Lie at 916.319.2144.

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State Senator Josh Newman represents the 29th Senate District, which is comprised of portions of Los Angeles County, Orange County, and San Bernardino County. The 29th District includes all or parts of the cities of Anaheim, Brea, Buena Park, Chino Hills, City of Industry, Cypress, Diamond Bar, Fullerton, La Habra, La Palma, Placentia, Rowland Heights, Stanton, Walnut, West Covina and Yorba Linda. Senator Newman is a former United States Army officer, businessperson, and veterans’ advocate, and lives in Fullerton with his wife and daughter.

Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin represents California’s 44th Assembly District, which includes the communities of Camarillo, El Rio, Moorpark, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Thousand Oaks, and Westlake Village.

Assemblymember Irwin’s website: <http://asmcd.org/irwin>