

Protecting parks from expensive and potentially explosive waste

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State Senator John Laird's (D-Santa Cruz) bill to transition California away from single-use, one-pound propane cylinders to refillable canisters that are safer for consumers and better for the environment passed the State Senate last week, making it easier for campers to leave no trace.

SB 1280 gives the makers of the single-use cylinders almost four years to transition to refillable cylinders. The one-pound propane cylinders are often used in lanterns, cooking stoves, and other outdoor devices. It is estimated that more than 7 million are sold annually in California. They pose multiple problems and safety concerns for local government hazardous waste and recycling operations.

"Our beaches and our parks are often littered with these disposable canisters," said Laird, Member of the Natural Resources & Water Committee. "A small percentage are properly disposed of at household hazardous waste sites, but millions end up in our landfills. They are expensive for cities and counties to collect. California should move away from these single-use products and transition to refillable cylinders. SB 1280 can reduce pollution, cut the amount going into our landfills, and improve safety for workers who must handle these cylinders."

CPSC estimates that less than 15% of the single-use cylinders are safely recycled through the Household Hazardous Waste programs offered by local governments. "Statewide efforts to reduce single-use products are making an impact on waste reduction. Single-use propane cylinders litter our parks and campgrounds and pose a threat to our maintenance and sanitation workers," said Doug Kobold, CPSC Executive Director. "Our state's household hazardous waste programs only see a small fraction of the quantity of cylinders used in the state each year. We've sponsored SB 1280 to promote the sensible transition to refillable cylinders and reduce the presence of this potentially dangerous and wasteful single-use product."

The one-pound propane cylinders have become such a problem in parks and campgrounds that Yosemite's sustainability initiative includes reducing the improper disposal of them. The only cylinders available to purchase inside the park are refillable. Similar initiatives have begun at Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks.

In addition to CPSC's sponsorship, SB 1280 is supported by a large coalition that includes StopWaste, SWANA Legislative Task Force, Republic Services, ReGen Monterey, Rethink Waste, Californians Against Waste, Zero Waste Sonoma, WM, Circular Polymers, Sunnyvale, California Waste and Recycling Association, Recycling and Waste Reduction Commission of Santa Clara County, among many others.

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