

Two Landmark Bills in California Aiming to Increase Battery Recycling Signed Into Law

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Two bills were signed by Governor Gavin Newsom to increase battery recycling in California. We applaud the Governor for including the following bills as part of his legislative climate package. “After an eight-year journey, finally Californians will have free and convenient collection locations throughout the state for loose batteries and embedded-battery products,” says Doug Kobold, Executive Director of CPSC.

“This is a historic achievement. With these bills, Californians will finally have convenient, universal access to battery recycling. This will not only keep them out of the garbage and recycling streams where they pose such a huge hazard, but will also ensure that they get recycled, reducing our need to extract more natural resources for new electronics,” says Nick Lapis, Director of Advocacy, Californians Against Waste.

“This is a great day for our industry with the Governor signing these bills. SB 1215 and AB 2440 together will protect our workers and infrastructure from the growing number of batteries entering the waste stream every day. This year alone, RethinkWaste has already suffered six fires due to a lithium-ion or suspected lithium-ion battery. I fear every day an improperly disposed of product with an embedded battery or loose battery could result in another catastrophic fire like the one we faced in 2016. We are grateful for Senator Newman and Assemblymember Irwin’s leadership on this critical issue,” Joe La Mariana, Executive Director, RethinkWaste.

Under the leadership of the California Product Stewardship Council (CPSC), and in partnership with Californians Against Waste and RethinkWaste, both bills set national precedent addressing rising occurrences of fires in the waste and recycling systems. Below is a brief description of the three current bills and their expected implications.

AB 2440, Responsible Battery Recycle Act of 2022. Assembly Member Irwin (D-Camarillo)

This bill would enact the Responsible Battery Recycling Act of 2022, which would require producers to establish, fund, and operate a stewardship program for the collection and recycling of covered batteries and covered battery-embedded products, as defined. The bill would require a producer or stewardship organization to develop and to submit to state

agencies a stewardship plan and would prescribe the standards and elements required in a stewardship plan for covered batteries and in a stewardship plan for covered battery-embedded products.

This bill underscores the idea of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). EPR ensures that producers will be responsible for end-of-life costs of products instead of governments and taxpayers. In this case, the disposal of covered and embedded batteries will shift from taxpayer-funded waste management programs to stewardship organizations funded by producers of the products.

SB 1215, Electronic Waste Recycling Act of 2003: covered battery-embedded products. Senator Newman (D-Fullerton)

This bill would, among other things, expand the definition of “covered electronic device” to include a “covered battery-embedded product,” thereby expanding the scope of the act to include covered battery-embedded products. The bill would require a consumer, on and after January 1, 2026, to pay a covered electronic waste recycling fee amount, determined by CalRecycle, upon the purchase of a new or refurbished covered battery-embedded product.

The influx of battery-embedded products 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. SB 1215 will replace the current, labyrinthine, and unsafe process for battery disposal with a safe, convenient, and accessible system for consumers to safely dispose of products with embedded batteries. SB 1215 expands the existing, successful e-waste program to include battery-embedded products sold in California to ensure that those products are recycled safely and responsibly.

For more information, visit <http://www.CalPSC.org>.