

New legislation proposes a statewide program to recycle batteries

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California Senate District 29

Anaheim, Brea, Chino Hills, Cypress, Diamond Bar, Fullerton, La Habra La Palma, Placentia, Rowland Heights, Stanton, Walnut, West Covina, Yorba Linda

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.

“In a world where batteries are increasingly powering everything, we still haven’t solved for how to safely dispose of them when they’re done. Currently, 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. The issue gained attention when a massive fire broke out at the Shoreway Environmental Center in San Carlos in 2016, causing millions of dollars in damages that required months of repair.

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.

About State Senator Josh Newman

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.

About State Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin

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.

The article above was released by the office of California State Senator Josh Newman.

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