



CPSC
California Product
Stewardship Council™



A Public Agency



**Californians
Against Waste**



Sunnyvale



RESOURCE RECOVERY
COALITION OF CALIFORNIA

March 2nd, 2021

Senator Ben Allen
Chair of the Senate Environmental Quality Committee
State Capitol, Room 2205
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Senate Bill 244 Lithium-ion Batteries: Illegal Disposal and Fire Prevention – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Allen:

We, the undersigned organizations, write in support of SB 244, 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 even explode. According to FireRover’s November 2020 report, over 1,800 fires were experienced at MRFs and other solid waste and recycling facilities in the US and Canada in the prior 12 months, including “22 reported injuries and three deaths that can either be directly or indirectly attributed to these fire incidents”.³ The majority of these fires have been known to be caused by Li-ion batteries.

According to Resource Recycling (March 16, 2020) “As has been well-reported, fires attributed to lithium-ion batteries are becoming a major problem for MRFs. More and more of these batteries enter the waste stream, leading to explosions and thermal incidents both on recycling trucks and in recycling centers.”⁴ The article goes on to say “With more facility fires of greater severity, insurance companies are shelling out much more than they are taking in on premiums and are subsequently unwilling to renew their policies”.⁴

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 close to 2.5 hours to extinguish it. Additionally, the facility was forced to shut down for 125 days. As a result of this fire, the Shoreway facility has seen a more than ten-fold increase in insurance premiums now spread over seven different insurance companies.

A guidance document 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 batteries being improperly disposed of in the curbside trash and recycling containers, or other methods of improper disposal. However, the state also needs a comprehensive collection and recycling infrastructure to provide consumers ample opportunities to properly 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 sorely needed collection and recycling 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 244.**

Sincerely,



Doug Kobold, Executive Director
California Product Stewardship Council



Joe La Mariana, Executive Director Rethink Waste



Nick Lapis, Director of Advocacy Californians Against Waste



Leslie Lukacs, Executive Director Zero Waste Sonoma



Larry Klein, Mayor City of Sunnyvale



Claudia Bill de la Pena, Mayor City of Thousand Oaks



Jennifer Lombardi, General Manager Mendo Recycle



Laura J. Ferrante, Government Affairs Advocate Resource Recover Coalition of California

Cc: The Honorable Bob Archuleta
The Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Environmental Quality

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

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

³ FireRover - Fogelman, R. (2020). NOVEMBER 2020 FIRE REPORT: ANOTHER FIRE SURGE?

⁴ Resource Recycling – Brainard, N. (2020). First Person Perspective: Why insurance costs are on the rise for recycling companies.