

RECYCLE, MI
Supporter Monthly Newsletter

Prioritize battery safety



From cell phones to power tools and even electric toothbrushes, the invention of lithium-ion batteries has transformed the way we power our world. While their high energy density, lightweight design, and rechargeability make them a versatile component of many electronics, they're highly reactive and can easily cause a fiery explosion when compromised.

In fact, the National Waste and Recycling Association estimates that each year, over 5,000 fires occur at recycling centers, with many linked to the improper disposal of lithium-ion batteries. Putting lithium-ion-powered products in your trash or recycling cart can lead to fires that contaminate recycling and put workers at risk. So, what should you do instead?

The National Fire Prevention Association is here to help, designating this year's Fire Prevention Week (from October 5 - 11) as "Charge into Fire Safety: Lithium-Ion Batteries in Your Home."

NFPA suggests three steps to help charge into fire safety:

- When buying a product that uses a lithium-ion battery, look for a safety certification like UL, ETL, or CSA.

- When buying a new charger for your phone, Bluetooth speaker, or other lithium-ion powered device, make sure to only purchase chargers from the products' manufacturers or from one that the manufacture has approved.
- Recycle batteries responsibly by utilizing a proper recycling drop-off center as opposed to putting batteries or battery-powered products into your curbside recycling or trash cart. NFPA recommends visiting [Call2Recycle](#) to find battery drop-off locations for different battery types.

In Michigan, many communities offer specialized drop-off services for battery collection. Retailers like [Staples](#) and [Battery Plus](#) also offer receptacles for consumers to safely dispose of their lithium-powered products.

Next time you replace a gadget or need to dispose of any type of battery, do your part to prevent fires in your community by taking these products to the appropriate drop-off location!

[learn more →](#)

want to learn more?



Glass recyclables
are simply
SHINING ✨
with potential!



Gladys here. Did you know when you recycle a glass jar it can become one of a wide variety of sparkling new glass items? It's a stunning process!

Sometimes though, when I finish up with a Mason jar, I like to melt down the glass and use it for one of my favorite crafts: glassblowing! It simply shines with the potential for so many new things — just like recycling. No wonder I like it so much!

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recycling myth - latex paint

Myth: All types of paint should be treated as household hazardous waste and be brought to an HHW collection facility and/or collection event.

Fact: Latex paint is not considered HHW - if latex paint recycling is not available near you, it should be dried and thrown away.

If you've ever visited a household hazardous waste event or drop-off center, you probably noticed that paint is typically considered HHW. When leftover paint is thrown into the trash, it can escape its container and leak into the ground, contaminating land and groundwater. Many paints contain flammable heavy metals, toxic oils, and even mercury. When dropped off at your HHW facility, paint is typically utilized for energy recovery, incorporated within products like cement, or repurposed within new paint products.

Because **latex paint** is composed mostly of water and has the ability to easily dry, **it is not considered a hazardous waste**. Latex paint containers will never be labelled as combustible, and instruct users to clean brushes with soap and water instead of a chemical solvent. In fact, latex paint can be recycled into new paint! If you don't have a recycling option open to you, don't take your latex paint to an HHW facility - instead, follow these disposal steps:

1. Allow the paint to dry by finding an area which is protected from children, pets, and rain, but has adequate air flow.
2. Remove the lid and allow liquids to evaporate; this could take several days to several months. Speed up the drying process by mixing equal amounts of an absorbent material, like cat litter, sawdust, or charcoal.
3. When thoroughly dry, the remaining hardened material can be put in your curbside trash cart.

Remember - never dump paint (latex or not) on the ground or down storm drains, and make sure the paint has completely hardened before throwing it away.

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featured material - polystyrene



Polystyrene, also called "foam", "PS" or "#6" or a brand name, such as Styrofoam, is a form of plastic that can be recycled, but it's not typically accepted in curbside carts. Why is that? Well, the same properties that make polystyrene an ideal lightweight filler for protecting packaging also limit its potential to be collected in curbside recycling programs.

Ever crushed Styrofoam with your hands? You'll notice how easy it is to break the material into small pieces. Similarly, when curbside recycling trucks compact material, polystyrene will break into bits. Glass also breaks during this process, but it's heavy enough to be fed into a specialized, gravity-powered screener after it arrives at the material recovery facility. Polystyrene, on the other hand, is 95% air and when crushed, the resulting small pieces will blow around the recycling center, contaminating the other materials.

The high proportion of air inside the foam also makes transportation highly inefficient. A full semi-trailer of cardboard, for example, can weigh 45,000 pounds, but the same trailer filled with loose polystyrene would weigh less than 1,000 pounds!

Luckily, recycling drop-off centers can bypass these contamination and weight issues by collecting the material in a designated container and removing the air inside through a densification process. What originally would have filled multiple semi-trucks can be neatly shrunk to fit a single pallet with the right equipment. [Click here to peak at the City of East Lansing's polystyrene densifier!](#)

As you can tell, polystyrene foam requires additional handling to recycle properly. Luckily, other packaging options can be used as a substitution. Some manufacturers are piloting packing peanuts that are compostable. If you're packaging a fragile item at home, think about using something easily recyclable like newspaper. Explore this [helpful link from DART](#) to find a drop-off location for your discarded polystyrene.

[learn more →](#)

ask the mrc



This week's Ask the MRC: What impacts the price of recycling?

partner highlight - HDR



HDR specializes in engineering, environmental, construction, and architecture solutions. Each of these sectors encounters waste – from construction debris to organic scraps and household recyclables. HDR's technical experts help clients develop to execute plans that make cost-effective sustainable materials management possible.

In 2018, Michigan passed amendments to Michigan solid waste law through Part 115, which set new benchmark goals for recycling access and rates. HDR is helping county leaders across Michigan to identify materials management opportunities to help them meet the goals they are setting during materials management planning. For example, HDR is collaborating with St. Clair County's leadership to curate a public outreach and education campaign aimed at boosting recycling rates and encouraging participation in sustainable materials management.

Many of HDR's 200+ offices have designated "sustainability stewards" that work to reduce waste and encourage recycling and composting within their offices. HDR is proud to practice what they preach as they partner with clients to implement sustainable materials management for both the public and private sectors.

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get involved



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Thanks for Subscribing

The team at *Michigan Recycling Coalition* wants to extend a hearty 'thank you' to all of our wonderful readers. You're making recycling better in Michigan, and we want to keep that going! If you know of anyone who would benefit from this newsletter, please direct them to [this sign-up form](#).

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