PRESS RELEASE

Lithium-ion Batteries & Hot Loads

Recently, here at Midway City Sanitary District (MCSD), we experienced a “hot load”. Fortunately, due to the knowledge, diligence and team work here at MCSD and the help of the Westminster Fire Department, the fire was extinguished, there were no injuries and the truck was spared.

What is a Hot Load?

A truckload of recyclables or trash that catches fire, smolders, spontaneously combusts, or becomes toxic as a result of incompatible waste mixing inside a collection truck. Hot loads can potentially jeopardize the health and safety of the driver, the collection truck and possibly, the public.

When trash is collected, it is compacted in the truck to make room for more refuse. The compaction process makes it possible for lithium-ion batteries to explode in the truck and start a fire.

Although hot loads may be caused by a variety of sources, lithium-ion batteries are the most common.

Seneca Insurance Company posted the following on their blog in January 2024. “Lithium-Ion Battery Fires on the Rise, Destroying Properties, Taking Lives” (https://www.senecainsurance.com/lithium-ion-battery-fires-on-the-rise-destroying-properties-taking-lives)

“According to UL Solutions, nationwide there have been 445 lithium-ion battery fires, 214 injuries, and 38 deaths.”

“Why Do Lithium-Ion Batteries Cause Fires?”

“Thermal runaway, a phenomenon in which overheating causes a catastrophic chain reaction, can pose a significant risk in using lithium-ion batteries. Overcharging, puncturing, or excessive heat can all damage

the battery's exterior case. The electrolytes in the battery are combustible and can leak if the battery is broken. Leaks can cause spontaneous combustion, and flames can spread quickly."

"Even with standard safety precautions in place, improper handling or negligence can render these batteries hazardous. Furthermore, with the surge in lithium-ion batteries sourced from overseas vendors, batteries manufactured to lesser standards and with fewer safety measures can cause fires that harm or kill people."

We urge residents to properly dispose of batteries by taking them to a hazardous waste collection center near you. There is no cost to drop off batteries at one of the four county Household Hazardous Waste Collection Centers, visit https://oclandfills.com/hazardous-waste to find a location near you. While you're at the hazardous waste center, be sure and ask for a free "battery collection container" that you can keep at home for safely storing expired batteries until you make the time to drop them off.

For more information check out https://batteryfiresfety.org