



Press Release

20 May 2024

Warning over batteries in bins after fire breaks out in bin lorry

Fenland District Council is warning residents about the dangers of binning batteries and electrical items after a fire broke out in the back of a bin lorry.

Crews were collecting bins in the Elliott Road area of March when they noticed smoke coming from the back of the lorry.

Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service responded quickly and assisted with extinguishing the four tonnes of materials once safely tipped.

The fire service believes the fire on Saturday, 11 May, was caused by a lithium-ion battery that had been put in a bin.

Lithium-ion batteries are in a lot of everyday items, like mobile phones, toothbrushes, toys, laptops, e-bikes and e-scooters and their use has increased as e-cigarettes and vapes have become more popular.

These batteries can get crushed or damaged in bin lorries, releasing flammable electrolytes which can lead to explosions and trigger rapidly spreading fires.

It is very fortunate that no one was hurt in the incident at the weekend. The fire did disrupt bin collections from around 6,000 properties as the waste transfer station in March, where the waste was extinguished, had to close for the rest of the day.

Cllr Peter Murphy, Fenland District Council's Portfolio Holder for Refuse and Cleansing, Parks and Open Spaces, said: "Our very simple plea to residents is not to put any battery, electrical item or vape into any household waste bin, or indeed any waste bin. We have seen how easily they can cause a fire and put the safety of our crews at risk. Please make sure you recycle your batteries responsibly and never put them in the bin.

"I'd like to thank the collection crew, firefighters, and staff at the waste transfer station for dealing with this incident so quickly. Thankfully no one was hurt."

Nationally, battery fires in bin lorries and waste sites are an increasing problem, with research published from Material Focus last week revealing there had been [over](#)

[1,200 such fires across the UK in the last year](#) – an increase of 71% from 700 in 2022.

Group Commander Rob Olivier, Head of Community Fire Safety at Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service, said: “Crews did a great job to ensure the fire was tackled safely. Their fast actions meant the incident was dealt with quickly and effectively.

“Batteries can be a fire hazard, especially when they are compacted and damaged when mixed in with any household or recyclable waste. Damage battery can lead to ignition of the highly reactive lithium, leading to a fire. We would urge residents to make sure they dispose of batteries correctly at an appropriate recycling facility.

“To safely dispose of them, batteries should be taken to local recycling centres, or, for household batteries, many shops have collection bins in-store.”

Batteries, of all kinds, whether loose or hidden in electricals – should never be placed in your waste or recycling bins at home.

If possible, remove batteries from electricals and recycle the batteries and electricals separately at your local Household Recycling Centre, supermarket, or other battery recycling point. If you can't remove the batteries, then always recycle your electricals at your nearest electrical recycling point. For more information on recycling batteries and electricals, visit: www.recycleyourelectricals.org.uk

Last month, Cambridgeshire County Council also introduced [dedicated vape recycling bins at all nine of its Household Recycling Centres](#).

More information about what can be recycled in your bins at home and at the Household Recycling Centres can be found on Fenland District Council's website at: www.fenland.gov.uk/whatgoesinmybins

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Notes to Editors

For media enquiries, please contact the Fenland District Council press office on 01354 622226 or email: communications@fenland.gov.uk