

INCORRECT DISPOSAL OF BATTERIES AN INCREASED FIRE RISK



Background

Material Recovery Facilities (MRF) and other waste facilities (including collection trucks) are seeing an increase in fires and smolders. The increase is largely contributed to the influx of battery operated electronics in circulation and the incorrect disposal by residents, once these products become obsolete.

What types of batteries start fires?

All types of batteries have a potential to start a fire. Not only are batteries a risk if they are punctured or come into contact with metal, but rechargeable lithium-ion batteries used in laptops, mobile phones, power drills and toys can overheat on their own and start a fire, even while the MRF is closed.



Laptop Battery - Visy MRF July 2020



Torch Battery - Visy MRF August 2020

What are the risks associated with incorrect disposal of batteries?

The incorrect disposal of batteries into the household recycling bin by residents has the potential to put at risk the health and safety of:

- MRF employees
- Collection truck drivers
- Local communities of where MRF's are located

It also has a potential to significantly disrupt kerbside recycling within the state.

What is Visy doing to minimise the risk?

The health and safety of Visy employees, visitors and the local communities in which it operates in is paramount. Hence, Visy has made significant investment into its MRF's to reduce the risk of a significant fire.

Some recent investments include:

- Thermal Imaging Cameras - to scan piles of material for any potential heat source
- Water Cannons - installed in the intake area
- Early Warning Smoke Detectors - to alert staff of potential fire risk

Additional to the measures already implemented at Visy's MRF's, Visy is endeavoring to raise the awareness of correct battery disposal to the community through its website and social media platforms and its Local Government customers. It is also lobbying Sustainability Victoria to assist in a state wide education campaign.

What can Local Government do to minimise the risk?

Due to the high risks associated with incorrect disposal of batteries, Visy is strongly encouraging its Local Government customers to communicate to its residents on the correct disposal of batteries and products containing batteries. Also informing residents of the potential risks associated with incorrect disposal.

Suggested communication methods:

- Council social media platforms
- Council website
- Resident newsletter
- Updating recycling education material to specifically include "no batteries"

Visy cannot tackle this issue alone and requires a team effort from its Local Government customers.

Next Steps

With the recycling peak season fast approaching and the warmer weather almost upon us, it is vitally important that we start now to minimise the risk associated with batteries ending up at our MRF.

Over the coming weeks, Visy will be in contact with each council to discuss (and assist if required) what actions council will put in place to minimise the risk of incorrect battery disposal.

Visy has developed the below artwork which will be published on Visy's website and social media platforms. It is also available for use by Visy's LG customers. The artwork can be provided in any format to suit council's communication needs.

*If you have any questions or wish to obtain the "Batteries Start Fires" artwork, please do not hesitate to contact **Chris De Fazio** on **0400 733 482** or chris.defazio@visy.com.au*

BATTERIES START FIRES



Never dispose of batteries or objects containing batteries in your bins.



Visit recyclingnearyou.com.au/batteries
for safe disposal options for batteries