

Collect
Recycle
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National Waste
& Recycling AssociationSM

March 5, 2025

Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee
3231 Minnesota Senate Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: Support for Battery Take-Back Programs

Dear Committee members:

The National Waste and Recycling Association (NWRA) – Minnesota Chapter asks for your support of the provisions in Senate File 1690 to address battery collection and disposal. The NWRA – MN Chapter represents the companies that support 18,000 jobs and provide collection, sorting, recycling, and disposal of residential and commercial waste in Minnesota.

Senate File 1690 addresses a gap in managing problematic materials at their end of life. The current electronics recycling system does not capture enough battery-containing materials, which wrongly end up in garbage and recycling carts where they pose a significant safety risk to collection crews and processing facilities. Creating an effective battery take-back program with clear end-of-life certainty and consistent public awareness campaigns that educate consumers about safe disposal methods is urgently needed. NWRA chapters around the country have been working closely with stakeholders to successfully pass battery stewardship legislation, and we're committed to doing the same in Minnesota.

Many electronics contain lithium-ion batteries, which are subject to degradation from loading, compacting, stacking, and crushing during recycling operations safe for regular curbside recyclables. Degradation can cause thermal runaway, even in dead batteries, and produce intense heat resulting in fires. In 2018, one of our members experienced a battery fire at their \$20 million transfer facility resulting in a catastrophic loss. In 2023, Rice County landfill had a battery fire that burned for a week.

A survey of materials recovery facility operators (MRFs) nationally found MRFs averaging more than 18 fires per year per facility. This has led to skyrocketing insurance rates, with premium increases of 10 to 50 times due to fires. This is completely unsustainable and is preventing some facilities from getting the insurance coverage they need. With lithium-ion battery use expected to increase six-fold by 2030, it's essential that Minnesota have a system in place for the proper collection and handling of small-to-medium portable batteries, including lithium-ion batteries.

Thank you for your consideration of our perspective, and we hope that action is taken this year to prevent the significant safety hazards, including fires that endanger people and property, caused by the improper disposal of lithium-ion batteries.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amber L. Backhaus".

Amber Backhaus – NWRA Lobbyist