

Going Green in Londonderry

What to do with old Batteries

Do you have used dry cell or button batteries lying around at home? Batteries can contain toxic components: mercury, lithium and lead to name a few. These toxins may work their way into the environment if improperly disposed of, which can result in groundwater/drinking water contamination.

The different kinds of batteries used in the home are described below. Those identified as hazardous waste need to be brought to Londonderry's Drop Off Center or Household Hazardous Waste Day.

Dry Cell Batteries

These can be rechargeable or non-rechargeable. Rechargeable batteries come in many types including Nickel-Metal Hydride, Nickel Cadmium and Lithium Ion. They are used in toys, power tools, phones and hybrid cars, and are favored in these devices due to their extreme durability. Once spent, they are hazardous waste.

Non-rechargeable batteries come in two forms. Alkaline batteries are comprised mainly of zinc and magnesium. In the U.S. all added toxins were eliminated from alkaline batteries in the mid-1990s, so they are safe to place in the garbage.

Non-rechargeable Lithiums are extremely flammable and react violently when they get wet. They have been linked to fires in homes and vehicles as well as severe injury due to ingestion by pets and children. All lithium batteries (new or depleted) are considered hazardous.

Note that batteries are capable of heating up and causing fires. Leaving batteries in their original packaging until ready to use will help protect your home from fires.

Button Cell Batteries

Button cells are small disc-shaped batteries found in watches, hearing aids and novelty items. While some button cells are safe to throw away, many of them contain mercury or lithium and require proper disposal.

The information required to determine if a button cell battery is hazardous is often found only on the original packaging. Zinc-Air, Copper Oxide or Silver Oxide buttons are safe for homeowners to throw away. Mercury Oxide, Lithium or Magnesium Oxide, are hazardous waste.

For more information, contact the NHDES Household Hazardous Waste Program at 603-271-2407.

~ Courtesy of Londonderry's Solid Waste and Environment Committee and NH Dept. of Environmental Services ~