

The Battery Bomb You Are Probably Living With

Kim Komando, The Current, Komando.com, 10/14/25

I had a staffer who liked to ride his e-bike to work. One day, I was shocked to see him charging it in the lobby. I politely asked him to unplug it and move it outside in the bike parking area because, yes, lithium-ion batteries can be a serious fire hazard. He was obviously not happy and actually told me I didn't know what I was talking about. Ahem, who's name is on the building, buddy?

In New York City alone, fires caused by lithium-ion batteries have more than doubled in the past few years. In 2023, there were 268 fires, 150 injuries, and 18 deaths, all traced back to things like e-bikes and devices charging indoors.

Lithium-ion batteries are everywhere, powering your phone, laptop, iPad, toothbrush, e-bike, EV and power bank. We love them because they're compact, rechargeable and efficient.

But fires caused by lithium batteries are becoming more common and more dangerous. A small phone battery can ignite a couch. Let's make sure you and your family are safe.

Why these fires happen

If lithium batteries are damaged, defective, overcharged or get too hot, they can enter something called thermal runaway. This is a chain reaction where the battery explodes violently, burns and spreads faster than most people can react.

And no, it's not just cheap knockoffs. Fires have started in brand-name devices, too. But cheap chargers, off-brand batteries and poor storage make things way worse.

Laptop + device safety

- Never leave your laptop or phone in a hot car or on a windowsill in the sun.
- If it feels unusually warm, unplug it and power down.
- Use a free app like [Core Temp](#) (Windows) or [Macs Fan Control](#) (Mac) to monitor temps. Over 175°F? Bad news.
- Got an old phone you're not using? Don't toss it in a drawer. Store it in a [fireproof bag](#). They're \$20 on Amazon and worth every penny. Thank goodness airlines have these on board now.
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E-bike safety (big one)

- Only buy e-bikes with a **UL 2271-certified battery**. That label means it passed real safety tests.
- Use the charger that came with your bike. No cheap replacements.
- Never charge it indoors, especially overnight or when you're not home.
- Store it in a cool, dry place, away from direct sun.
- If your battery smells weird, hisses or bulges, unplug the bike immediately and call the fire department.

Don't trash that battery

Got an old phone, laptop or e-bike battery? Don't toss it in the garbage, it could catch fire.

Use [Call2Recycle.org](#) to find a place to drop it off near you. It's quick, easy and your trash won't explode.

Note from Tom:

In Pleasanton you can put your household batteries and old cell phones in a plastic bag and put the bag on top of your blue top garbage can. No lithium ion batteries are accepted.

We also have several options for disposing of used batteries responsibly. The City of Pleasanton operates battery recycling drop-off stations at five public locations:

- City of Pleasanton Operations Service Center at 3333 Busch Road,
- Pleasanton City Hall Lobby at 200 Old Bernal Ave,
- the Pleasanton Senior Center at 5353 Sunol Blvd,
- the Pleasanton Public Library at 400 Old Bernal Ave, and the
- Livermore-Pleasanton Fire Station No. 2 at 6300 Stoneridge Mall Road.

These stations feature color-coded containers for alkaline and carbon zinc (heavy duty) batteries, rechargeable batteries, and disposable lithium batteries.

In addition to these drop-off points, The Home Depot at 6000 Johnson Dr in Pleasanton offers a battery recycling drop-off location.