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FIRE DEPARTMENT

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SAFETY IS THE BEST GIFT THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Fire Department reminds Holiday shoppers to take C.H.A.R.G.E. of Battery Safety

MUSCATINE, Iowa — As holiday wish lists fill with the latest technology and battery-powered devices, the Muscatine Fire Department is reminding residents to be aware of the unique fire risks associated with lithium-ion batteries and how to reduce those risks through proper selection, charging, storage, and disposal.



Lithium-ion batteries are commonly found in many household and gift items, including toys, laptops, power tools, drones, e-scooters, lawn equipment, and personal electronics. While these batteries offer longer run times and improved efficiency, they also store a large amount of energy and can become unstable if damaged, overcharged, improperly used, or exposed to extreme heat or cold.

When lithium-ion batteries fail, they can overheat rapidly, ignite nearby materials, or even explode. Fires involving these batteries can spread quickly and be difficult to extinguish.

"I remember Muscatine for its sunsets. I have never seen any on either side of the ocean that equaled them" — Mark Twain



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To help educate the public during the holiday shopping season, the Muscatine Fire Department is sharing safety guidance from the Fire Safety Research Institute (FSRI), part of UL Research Institutes, through its **Take C.H.A.R.G.E. of Battery Safety** campaign.

"The size of the battery directly impacts the severity of a fire if something goes wrong," said Gary Ronzheimer, Muscatine Fire Department Battalion Chief. "Larger batteries contain more stored energy, which can result in faster fire spread and greater damage when they fail."

Fire departments across the country are seeing an increase in fires, injuries, and deaths related to lithium-ion battery-powered devices. According to data from UL Solutions, since 2022 there have been more than 3,000 fires and 188 explosions involving consumer products powered by lithium-ion batteries.

Take C.H.A.R.G.E. of Battery Safety Tips

The Muscatine Fire Department encourages residents to follow these important safety steps when purchasing, using, or gifting lithium-ion battery-powered devices:

- **Choose Certified Products** - Select devices that are certified by a nationally recognized testing laboratory to ensure they meet established safety standards.
- **Handle Devices with Care** - Always use the manufacturer-provided charger and follow charging instructions. Do not modify batteries or chargers. Charge devices away from flammable materials and avoid extreme temperatures or direct sunlight. Larger devices, such as e-bikes or scooters, should be charged away from sleeping areas and never in a way that blocks exit paths. Avoid overnight charging of large battery systems.
- **Always Watch for Warning Signs** - Stop using the device immediately if you notice swelling, punctures, excessive heat, strange odors, or unusual sounds such as hissing or popping. White or gray wispy smoke is a sign of immediate danger.



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- **Recycle Batteries and Devices Properly** - Never place lithium-ion batteries or battery-powered devices in household trash. Take them to a designated battery recycling or hazardous waste facility.
- **Get Out Quickly if There's a Fire** - If a battery fire occurs, evacuate immediately. Close doors behind you as you exit and call 9-1-1 from a safe location. Follow your home fire escape plan.
- **Educate Others** - Share lithium-ion battery safety information with family, friends, and neighbors to help reduce fire risk throughout the community.

"To truly Take C.H.A.R.G.E. of Battery Safety, these steps must be viewed as connected," Ronzheimer said. "Following all of them together significantly reduces risk and helps keep homes, families, and neighborhoods safer."

For more information on lithium-ion battery fire safety, visit batteryfiresafety.org.

Recycling batteries in the Muscatine County service area

Regular, non-rechargeable batteries, such as A, AA, AAA, C, D, and 9-volt batteries, should have their ends tapped before being disposed of in regular trash. Do NOT put these types of batteries in the recycle bins.

"Any type of rechargeable battery, including Button, Lithium-Ion batteries, and Nickel-cadmium, should have the ends taped off and be dropped off at the front office at the Transfer Station," David Popp, Solid Waste Manager for the City of Muscatine, said.

The Transfer Station is the regional collection center for Muscatine and Louisa Counties with the exception of the City of Wilton.

"These (batteries) can be recycled at no charge," Popp said. "Lead-acid batteries (car batteries)



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are included as batteries that can be recycled for no charge at the Transfer Station."

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