



**KENT COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF  
PUBLIC WORKS**

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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# **Kent County Department of Public Works asks residents to properly dispose of lithium-ion batteries at free household hazardous waste sites**

*Disposal facility fires increasing due to improper disposal*

**Grand Rapids, MI** – After several battery fires over the past month at **Kent County Department of Public Works** (DPW) facilities, department officials are asking residents to properly dispose of lithium-ion batteries and other hazardous waste.

These types of batteries are found in common items like cell phones, electronic scooters and bikes, electric toothbrushes and vaping devices, and can pose safety risks if not handled and disposed of properly. If simply thrown in the trash, they can ignite or explode when crushed or handled by the DPW's sorting equipment.

Most recently, an electric scooter containing a lithium-ion battery was tossed into the trash and ignited at the South Kent Recycling and Waste Center.

“While we were able to safely extinguish the fires, we would like residents to take advantage of our free SafeChem disposal program,” said **Dar Baas**, DPW director. “Lithium-ion batteries become a huge problem if they are not disposed of properly, and for the safety of our workers and facilities, we’d like Kent County residents to be mindful of what they’re throwing in the trash.”

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [released an analysis](#) in 2021 of lithium-ion battery fires in waste management and recycling and found hundreds of fire incidents due to the batteries and stated that incidents were likely to increase because of the continued growth in popularity of lithium-ion batteries.

The DPW offers its SafeChem program to all residents, which allows for the safe disposal of household hazardous waste. There are five convenient disposal sites throughout the county. More information on disposing of hazardous waste safely, including a list of accepted items, can be found on the [DPW's website](#).

The Kent County Department of Public Works provides municipal solid waste disposal services to ensure the effective removal, storage and disposal of residential and commercial solid waste through various facilities and programs, including Waste-to-Energy, the Recycling and Education Center, North Kent Transfer Station and South Kent Landfill.

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