



# Disposal and Recycling Guide to Batteries

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JOHNSTON, R.I. — The Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation (RIRRC) accepts some types of batteries at its [Eco-Depot](#) hazardous-waste collection events, and some hardware/home-improvement, electronic and office supply stores, large and small, accept rechargeable batteries, which they recycle or dispose of responsibly.

Here is a rundown of the different types of batteries and how to properly dispose of them:

**Single-use alkaline and carbon zinc batteries** can be disposed of with the rest of your trash. This category includes most single-use AAA, AA, C, D, 6V and 9V batteries. A [federal law](#) passed in 1996 resulted in the removal of mercury from most types of batteries, including single-use alkaline batteries. These batteries are now made with primarily common metals, are classified as non-hazardous waste, and don't pose a health or environmental threat when disposed of in a landfill or incinerator.

Single-use alkaline batteries are generally not accepted at battery-collection events, including Eco-Depots, or at store-operated collection locations. That said, recycling options do exist for the billions of these types of batteries sold in the United States annually. [Earth911](#) keeps a list of locations that offer recycling services for single-use alkaline batteries.

**Single-use, long-lasting lithium (Li) batteries** are made for use in cameras and other energy-intensive electronics. This category can include AA, AAA and the stubbier 123A batteries. While these batteries can be disposed of in the trash, they are also accepted at Eco-Depot events and at recycling locations listed on Earth911.

**Rechargeable batteries** range in type from AA and AAA batteries to the batteries used in cell-phones, laptops and some toys. Most rechargeable batteries are considered household hazardous waste by the federal government and can leach into and pollute groundwater. They should be disposed of at a battery-collection event or location.

**Button or coin batteries** are made for use in watches, remote controls and other small electronic devices. These batteries often contain mercury and other hazardous chemicals, so should be disposed of responsibly. They are accepted at Eco-Depot events and at recycling locations listed on Earth911.

These candy-shaped batteries pose a health threat to children if ingested. Children suspected of ingestion should be taken to a pediatric emergency department for immediate care. Bring a companion battery or the product the battery came from for the doctor to inspect.

**Car batteries** contain lead and sulfuric acid, are considered hazardous waste, and should be disposed of responsibly. Most businesses that service cars or sell car batteries accept used car batteries. Car batteries aren't accepted at Eco-Depot events, but can be brought directly to RIRRC's facility during normal business hours for a small fee.

When disposing of batteries or storing loose batteries, put tape over the terminals to prevent the risk of a short circuit and fire. This is especially recommended for button batteries, lithium batteries and batteries with both terminals on the same end, such as 9V batteries.

Sarah Reeves, RIRRC's director of recycling services, recommends taping the terminals of all batteries prior to disposal. Even "dead" batteries can contain enough juice to cause a short circuit if their terminals come into contact with each other or conductive materials.

Additionally, large numbers of alkaline batteries shouldn't be disposed of as a group. Grouping batteries together can bring them into contact with one another, creating safety risks.