

Incorrect battery disposal causes needless fires

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Our lifestyles are increasingly dependent on batteries. These ubiquitous sources of energy power everything from our cars and smartphones, to watches, remote controls and many other devices. However, these essential

sources of power can be hazardous. A report from the Environmental Services Association (ESA) in the U.K. discovered that the incorrect disposal of batteries causes around 700 fires in Britain each year. This costs fire services \$195 million. The financial loss is considerably higher for those whose property has burnt down. A leading fire expert said: "These fires can be challenging for fire services to deal with....Everyone can do their bit...by ensuring they dispose of batteries correctly."

The biggest culprits for fires starting are lithium-ion batteries. These can explode and start fires if they are crushed or they get wet. An ESA spokesperson told the BBC that, "more and more people are putting devices containing these batteries in with household waste". He said: "That causes a real problem, because they have a tendency - when damaged - to explode or ignite....they're likely to be crushed, compacted, smashed or they might get wet." He added: "That can cause them to short-circuit. And of course, they're then in the presence of other flammable material like plastic, paper and card and that can lead to quite big fires." The ESA encouraged people to be mindful of the potential hazards of batteries

Sources: bbc.com / dailymail.co.uk / ecowatch.com

Writing

Fire authorities should pay people to dispose of batteries correctly. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

lifestyles / energy / power / smartphones / batteries / fire / property / expert / bit / culprits / get wet / devices / ignite / smashed / flammable / paper / plastic / hazards

True / False

- 1) The article says batteries depend on our lives. T / F
- 2) The article says batteries power remote controls and cars. T / F
- 3) Batteries are the cause of over 7,000 fires each year in the U.K. T / F
- 4) The article says not everyone can dispose of batteries correctly. T / F
- 5) Lithium-ion batteries can explode and start fires. T / F
- 6) Increasing numbers of people throw batteries in the garbage at home. T / F
- 7) Batteries can short-circuit and start fires. T / F
- 8) An environmental agency said we should understand battery hazards. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. dependent | a. offenders |
| 2. ubiquitous | b. getting rid of |
| 3. hazardous | c. squashed |
| 4. disposal | d. ever-present |
| 5. expert | e. blow up |
| 6. culprits | f. reliant |
| 7. explode | g. possible |
| 8. crushed | h. combustible |
| 9. flammable | i. dangerous |
| 10. potential | j. specialist |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) Will you start disposing of batteries properly from now?
- c) Have you ever put a battery in the household waste?
- d) What environmental damage do batteries do?
- e) What are the issues surrounding batteries for electric cars?
- f) Do you ever get stressed about your smartphone battery?
- g) How can we be more mindful of batteries?
- h) What questions would you like to ask battery makers?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. Our lifestyles are increasingly dependent | a. bit |
| 2. These ubiquitous | b. be mindful |
| 3. the incorrect disposal | c. circuit |
| 4. for those whose property | d. sources of energy |
| 5. Everyone can do their | e. or ignite |
| 6. household | f. material |
| 7. explode | g. on batteries |
| 8. That can cause them to short- | h. waste |
| 9. flammable | i. has burnt |
| 10. The ESA encouraged people to | j. of batteries |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think of batteries?
- What do you like and dislike about batteries?
- What things that you use have batteries in them?
- What are the dangers of batteries?
- How do batteries work?
- What do you think of rechargeable batteries?
- How do you dispose of batteries?
- Should we get a refund for recycling batteries?

Spelling

- Our lifestyles are increasingly etdenepdn on batteries
- These ibiusuqtuo sources of energy
- sources of power can be hdauosrza
- The financial loss is sadocerbilyn higher
- A leading fire teperx
- ensuring they sdopies of batteries correctly
- The biggest ctsirlup for fires
- These can xledeop and start fires
- they have a yctdnene
- cause them to shrot-tiriucc
- other efbmmalla material
- The ESA udgeraocen people to be mindful

Answers – Synonym Match

1. f	2. d	3. i	4. b	5. j
6. a	7. e	8. c	9. h	10. g

Role Play

Role A – Watches

You think watches are the most important battery-operated things. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): toys, remote controls or cordless tools.

Role B – Toys

You think toys are the most important battery-operated things. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): watches, remote controls or cordless tools.

Role C – Remote Controls

You think remote controls are the most important battery-operated things. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): toys, watches or cordless tools.

Role D – Cordless Tools

You think cordless tools are the most important battery-operated things. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): toys, remote controls or watches.

Speaking – Batteries

Rank these with your partner. Put the most important battery-operated things at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-----------|----------------------|
| • Watches | • Smartphones |
| • Cars | • Remote controls |
| • Clocks | • Cordless tools |
| • Toys | • Notebook computers |

Answers – True False

1	F	2	T	3	F	4	F	5	T	6	T	7	T	8	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.