

How to Safely Dispose of E-Cigarettes: Information for Individuals

The goal of this fact sheet is to explain to consumers the importance of safe disposal of e-cigarettes, including vape pens.



Do NOT put e-cigarettes in your household trash or recycling

- The lithium batteries can become damaged and cause fires.
- Nicotine is toxic and poses a risk to both workers and the environment.



DO take e-cigarettes to your household hazardous waste (HHW) collection site

- Many towns and counties have collection programs for HHW, which can be identified by searching online for HHW collections near you or contacting your local solid waste agency.
- Typically, HHW collections are free for residents.
- The e-cigarettes will be managed safely and prevent fires and releases of harmful chemicals to the environment.



A customer carefully disposing of multiple e-cigarettes at an HHW collection site. Photo courtesy of Mesa County, Colorado HHW



An e-cigarette showing the portions that contain the two hazards.

E-Cigarettes Contain Nicotine and Lithium Batteries

E-cigarettes contain nicotine and lithium batteries, making them hazardous waste.

Nicotine is toxic. Liquid nicotine in e-cigarettes can be easily absorbed by the skin, potentially causing nicotine poisoning with symptoms that include difficulty breathing, fainting, or seizures. Nicotine can also harm fish and other aquatic organisms.

Lithium batteries can catch fire, especially when damaged. When placed in household trash and recycling bins, lithium batteries often get damaged by trash compactors and can cause fires during transportation and at waste and recycling facilities.

Benefits of HHW Collection

Taking your e-cigarette waste to a HHW collection site is the best way to ensure that your hazardous waste does not:

- Cause a fire.
- Expose first responders and other workers to toxic chemicals.
- Release toxic chemicals into the environment.



Firefighter extinguishing a lithium battery fire after the combusted pile of recyclables was moved outside by a municipal recycling facility operator. Photo courtesy of Larimer County Solid Waste Department, Colorado.

