

Lithium battery dangers and safety

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If there is a serious injury or illness, a death or a dangerous incident caused by a lithium-ion battery, PCBU's must report it to us immediately on 13 10 50. This enables SafeWork NSW to investigate the incident and take appropriate action to identify the cause and potentially assist in the prevention of future incidents and/or injuries.

An incident involving lithium-ion batteries can lead to a number of potentially dangerous incidents that must be notified, even if no one is injured, including an uncontrolled implosion, explosion or fire.

Lithium-ion batteries have the potential to catch fire or explode if not handled, stored, or charged correctly. This can result in property damage, injuries, and even fatalities.

If lithium-ion batteries fail, energy is rapidly released which can create fire and explosions. Failing lithium-ion batteries may release highly toxic fumes and secondary ignitions even after the flames have been extinguished.

A chain reaction that can lead to overheating, fire, and even explosion. Thermal runaway can be triggered by factors such as overcharging, physical damage, manufacturing defects, or exposure to high temperatures.

When positive and negative terminals of a lithium-ion battery contact each other, short circuiting can result. This causes a rapid discharge of energy, potentially leading to overheating, fire, or explosion.

Physical damage includes puncturing or crushing. This can compromise the integrity of the internal battery components and lead to short circuits, thermal runaway, and other safety hazards.

While rare, manufacturing defects can lead to internal short circuits, thermal runaway, and safety hazards. It's important to purchase batteries from reputable manufacturers to minimize the risk of defects.

Managing the risk of lithium-ion battery fires is crucial. PCBU's and workers can help mitigate the risk of a lithium-ion battery fire by following these basic guidelines.

Small, undamaged batteries (not swollen, punctured, or leaking) can be safely disposed of at a battery recycling drop off point. It is recommended that battery terminals are taped over with clear adhesive tape before placing the battery carefully (without dropping it) into a battery recycling collection bin.

Lithium-ion batteries are classified as a Class 9 Dangerous Good. When transporting lithium-ion batteries you must follow the requirements of the Australian Dangerous Goods Code (ADG Code).

If you are unsure about the proper procedures for handling damaged lithium-ion batteries, seek guidance from



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experts or regulatory authorities in your area, such as SafeWork NSW, Fire & Rescue NSW, Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), local council.

Contact us for free full report

Web: <https://www.hollanddutchtours.nl/contact-us/>

Email: energystorage2000@gmail.com

WhatsApp: 8613816583346

