ROCKLAND POST - UNBIASED AND ACCURATE NEWS AND INFORMATION

Deadly NYC E-Bike Fire Highlights Dangers of Lithium-Ion Batteries

BY: County Executive Ed Day

A recent heartbreaking tragedy in New York City serves as a devastating reminder of the dangers posed by lithium-ion batteries and the importance of taking precautions to protect our families.

A 10-year-old boy lost his life, and four family members were critically injured after a lithium-ion battery sparked a fire inside a Bronx apartment. According to fire officials, the battery-powered device was positioned near the apartment's exit, trapping the family as flames rapidly spread.

My heart goes out to this family, and everyone impacted by this unimaginable tragedy. Unfortunately, incidents like this are becoming far too common.

According to FDNY, lithium-ion batteries have caused more than 400 fires in New York City this year alone, resulting in dozens of injuries and multiple deaths.

These batteries are found in countless devices we use every day, including smartphones, laptops, power tools, e-bikes, scooters, and wheelchairs. While they make our lives more convenient, they can also pose serious fire hazards when damaged, improperly charged, or manufactured without appropriate safety standards.

One of the greatest dangers is a process known as *thermal runaway*, which occurs when these batteries overheat triggering an intense fire or explosion within seconds that spread rapidly, leaving little time to escape.

Our Rockland County Office of Fire & Emergency Services urges residents to follow these critical safety precautions:

Purchase batteries and devices tested and certified by a nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as UL Solutions.
Never charge devices overnight or unattended and unplug devices when charging is complete.
Never charge or store e-bikes, scooters, or other battery-powered devices near doorways, stairwells, or escape routes.
If a battery becomes unusually hot, swells, leaks, makes strange noises, or emits an unusual odor, stop using it immediately.
If a battery begins smoking or catches fire, leave the area immediately and call 911. Do not attempt to fight the fire yourself.
I also want to stress that Lithium-ion batteries should NEVER be thrown in household trash or recycling bins. Improper disposal has caused fires in garbage trucks and waste facilities, putting workers and communities at risk.

Rockland residents can safely dispose of used batteries at the Rockland County Household Hazardous Waste Facility, located at 35 Firemen's Memorial Drive in Pomona. For information about accepted materials and drop-off hours, call 845-364-2444.
With the holiday shopping season approaching, I also encourage families to keep battery safety in mind when purchasing electronic gifts, toys, and other rechargeable devices. A bargain is never worth compromising your family's safety.