

Unsafe disposal of electrical items causes daily fires: Veolia urges caution to keep people safe

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Veolia, a leading resource management company, has launched a UK-wide campaign to combat a rise in fires across its operations that has reached, on average, one preventable fire every day. The campaign aims to educate the general public on the dangers of certain waste items and how they put the people who handle waste in danger as well as cause damage to vital recycling infrastructure.

The fires occur across the country in Refuse Collection Vehicles (RCVs) in residential areas and in waste management facilities, due to residents putting dangerous items in their recycling or rubbish bins and on-street litter bins. This puts both Veolia staff and the general public in direct danger.

The campaign videos, published across social media, contain real footage of the fires and explosions caused and focus on the danger of four items that are commonly misplaced in household bins and how they can impact the people who collect, sort, and process waste.

- Used vapes should be taken back to retailers, never placed in household recycling or rubbish bins or in on-street litter bins.
- Electrical items – items with batteries, plugs, cables, or hidden batteries such as those found in children’s toys and electrical toothbrushes – can be recycled but they must be handled safely at dedicated facilities. Residents can find local recycling points at recyclenow.com/recycling-locator
- Batteries can be easily recycled at dedicated recycling points, which can be found at recyclenow.com/recycling-locator
- Gas bottles and nitrous oxide (Nox) canisters need to be handled safely during disposal. In most

cases, residents needing to dispose of gas bottles or canisters can take them to their local Household Reuse and Recycling Centre, but this should be checked locally.

Vapes, electrical items, batteries, and gas canisters become extremely flammable when they are crushed. This puts both collection crews and the staff at recycling and waste sorting and processing facilities at risk of burns, chemical exposure and smoke inhalation – injuries that can be life-changing. It also causes damage to vital recycling infrastructure.

Residents can visit veolia.co.uk/dangerous-waste to watch real footage of what happens when dangerous items enter the waste stream and learn more about how to safely dispose of these materials.

Cory Reynolds, Director of Corporate Affairs, Veolia UK, Northern Europe Zone, said: *“At Veolia we pride ourselves on carrying out essential services whilst putting safety first in the workplace, and we do not accept our people or the communities we serve being put in danger. This campaign is necessary to educate residents on how to ensure their waste is safe, and we ask everyone to make these simple changes that will greatly decrease the chance of fires in collection vehicles and sorting facilities. This will have a huge impact on keeping the vital industry we work in safe and ensure that the people that handle waste are kept out of harm’s way whilst protecting the valuable materials residents work hard to separate for recycling.”*