Battery Sustainability: Disposal

Risks

Depending upon the chemistry of the battery, there are distinct environmental and health risks posed by the improper disposal of batteries. For example:

- Cadmium-Based batteries have been banned in the EU, except for specific equipment, due to the severe health effects of ingestion.
- Lithium-ion and Primary Lithium batteries can cause fires when damaged as well as an array of environmental impacts.
- Lead-Acid batteries contain sulfuric acid and can be harmful when touched. Additionally, they can contaminate the local environment and produce fires.

Battery Disposal Guidlines

The disposal of batteries varies from location to location, and your local hazardous waste authority and recycler will offer specific guidelines. Additionally, handling and transportation of batteries should be done with extreme caution. Rechargeable batteries that can be removed should placed in separate non-conductive containers or tape. Further precaution should be observed for Li-ion batteries and Lead-Acid batteries. All batteries should be completely discharged prior to disposal.

Below is a general guide for consumers on battery disposal:

1. Suitable for Household Trash: Alkaline and Zinc-Carbon batteries.
2. Can be Recycled: Almost all batteries, aside from Alkaline and Zinc-Carbon batteries, can be recycled. However, special consideration should be made for non-removable recharging batteries and automotive batteries.
3. Retailer/Manufacturer: Rechargeable batteries that cannot be removed from devices as well as automotive batteries (both Lithium-Ion and Lead-Acid batteries) should be taken to the appropriate retailer, specialized recycler, and or manufacturer. Apart from automotive Lead-Acid batteries intended for removal, the batteries should not be removed.
4. Hazardous Waste Collection Authority: Removable batteries, apart from Alkaline and Zinc-Carbon batteries, can be taken to the relevant hazardous waste collection authority.