OCRRA.org®

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NEVER Put Rechargeable Batteries in Your Trash or Recycling Bins

Prevent fires and protect waste workers with OCRRA's battery management guidelines

Batteries help power our lives. Look around your home and think about all of the items that run on rechargeable batteries. Many of us have laptops, power tools, cordless vacuums and cameras around the house. With advances in technology, battery packs that store a lot of energy are being produced for everything from e-bikes and scooters to modern lawn mowers. As a result, communities across the country are facing an emerging issue; rechargeable batteries can be dangerous if they are not managed properly.

When crushed, punctured or exposed to heat, rechargeable batteries can malfunction, sparking fires that are difficult to get under control. "Lithium-ion batteries contain volatile electrolytes, and when exposed to high temperatures or physical damage, they can release flammable gases," according to the U.S. Fire Administration. A battery that ignites can enter thermal runaway, a chain reaction of uncontrolled heating that can lead to a fire. Even after a lithium-ion battery fire is extinguished, it can reignite. These are some of the reasons New York State passed a law that says people cannot throw away rechargeable batteries. For Safety, they need special management. Rechargeable batteries never belong in your home trash or recycling bins.

When haulers empty your curbside bins into their trucks, the material is often compacted to make more room. If a rechargeable battery sparks after getting crushed in a truck full of trash or recyclables, the fire can spread very quickly. A rechargeable battery could also crack when it is dumped on the concrete floor of a trash or recycling facility. If a hidden battery manages to get that far without damage, it may be punctured by a loader scooping up material. These are not "what if" scenarios; they are real examples of rechargeable battery fires in Onondaga County.

We cannot solely rely on the quick actions of waste management workers to prevent serious injuries and costly damage in the future. Everyone in Onondaga County has a role in protecting our community, starting at home. When it is time to get rid of an old battery, it is very important that you manage it properly.





Syracuse DPW workers dumped a load of recyclables after noticing a fire in their truck in Dec. 2024. Firefighters say it was caused by a rechargeable battery that was improperly placed in a curbside recycling bin.

Photo Credit: City of Syracuse, 2024

The guidance depends on what type of battery you have (e.g., single-use or rechargeable). Read the label, then visit OCRRA.org/batteries to learn the next steps. OCRRA has been working diligently to provide more information on our website and to expand the number of free battery drop-off locations in Onondaga County. By bringing rechargeable batteries to a designated collection site, you are keeping them out of trash and recycling bins where they are likely to get crushed or punctured.

Throughout this newsletter, you will find important information about OCRRA's battery drop-off locations, including what types of batteries are accepted and why you need to cover the terminals with clear packing tape or put each battery in a separate, sealed plastic bag. Residents play a major role in preventing serious battery fires. We hope you'll take advantage of the resources that OCRRA has worked hard to offer. We know you'll agree that the safety of trash and recycling workers in our community is worth the time and effort.

OCRRA Launches Training to Help Firefighters Manage Damaged Batteries

OCRRA is partnering with the Onondaga County Department of Emergency Management and the city of Syracuse Fire Department to provide our community's firefighters with tools to manage the damaged, defective or recalled (DDR) batteries they encounter.

The most common type of DDR, rechargeable batteries, pose a serious fire risk when they are crushed, punctured or damaged from improper charging. In some cases, rechargeable batteries enter a chain reaction of uncontrolled heating, known as thermal runaway, that can lead to a fire or explosion. Even after a rechargeable battery fire is extinguished, there is a risk it will reignite.

Prevention is key! OCRRA arranged the first training session for Onondaga County and city of Syracuse firefighters. A representative from The Battery Network (formerly Call2Recycle) showed trainees how to safely pack DDR batteries inside a kit with fire suppressant. The Battery Network is a battery stewardship organization, approved by the New York State Rechargeable Battery Law.

OCRRA is also providing the first round of DDR battery management kits to fire departments that plan to continue this valuable training in the future. This service was made possible through a grant provided by the U.S. Department of Energy.

What Do I Bring to an OCRRA Battery Drop-off Location?

✓ Rechargeable Batteries

- May look like alkaline batteries, but say rechargeable. Read the label to check.
- Found in power tools, laptops, phones, etc.
- Weigh less than 11 pounds.
- **Cover terminals with non-conductive, clear packing tape or put each battery in a separate, sealed bag.**

✓ Button & Coin Batteries

- Found in hearing aids, watches, calculators, etc.
- **Wrap each battery between two pieces of non-conductive, clear packing tape to prevent them from touching, possibly igniting.**

✓ Single-use Lithium

- May look like alkalines, but say lithium. Read battery to check.
- Contain hazardous materials and can catch fire if not managed properly.
- **Cover terminals with non-conductive, clear packing tape or put each battery in a separate, sealed bag to prevent ignition.**



What NEVER Belongs at an OCRRA Battery Drop-off Location?



Vape Devices



ALKALINE BATTERIES



DAMAGED, DEFECTIVE, RECALLED (DDR) BATTERIES



Sharps
(needles and lancets)



E-MOBILITY BATTERIES
(e-bikes & e-scooters)



Fluorescent Bulbs



SEALED LEAD-ACID BATTERIES
(found in cars & ride-on toys)

Need help disposing of something?

Scan the QR code or visit OCRRA.org for guidance

How do I get rid of alkaline batteries?

If you've dropped off batteries in the past, you may notice the slot where alkaline batteries were previously placed in OCRRA's collection kiosks has been temporarily covered. OCRRA is making more room for rechargeable batteries, which pose a fire risk when they are not properly managed. As a result, single-use alkaline batteries will no longer be accepted at OCRRA battery drop-off locations. Residents can drop off alkaline batteries at a store that accepts them for recycling, such as Staples.

If that is not an option, they can be placed in your trash bin. The way alkaline batteries are manufactured has evolved over the years, making it acceptable to dispose of them in the trash. Please read the label to ensure you have an alkaline battery before you throw it away. Remember, several other battery types do pose a safety risk when disposed of improperly. Visit OCRRA.org/batteries to learn more.



FACT: Never put recyclables inside of plastic or paper bags. All materials should be loose in recycling bins.

How to Prepare Batteries at Home Before Visiting a Drop-off Location

Tape terminals or put each battery in a separate, sealed bag

One simple step goes a long way in preventing battery fires. Residents should cover battery terminals before storing or bringing them to a drop-off location. This is important because terminals that touch metal surfaces or other batteries can spark and cause a fire.

There are two simple ways for residents to prepare batteries at home:

Tape battery terminals with clear packing tape. The label must be visible. Tip: lay one piece of tape flat, sticky side up. Put the battery in the center. Place another piece of tape on top, sticky side down. See below.

-OR-

You can place each battery in a separate, sealed plastic bag. Ensure the battery will not fall out.

This guidance applies to all battery types accepted at OCRRA drop-off locations (see below for the list).

Tip: Do not store batteries for more than six months. Shorter storage times may be recommended by some manufacturers.





A rechargeable battery sandwiched between two pieces of packing tape.



Button batteries separated so they don't touch and terminals are covered by tape.



A rechargeable power tool battery, sealed in a zip-top plastic bag to prevent it from falling out.

OCRRA Has Four New Battery Drop-off Locations in Syracuse

It is easier than ever to properly manage batteries. From grocery and hardware stores to community centers, chances are there is a free and convenient drop-off point near you!

OCRRA is expanding its network of locations with four new sites in the city of Syracuse. Cecile, Magnarelli, Southwest and Northeast Community Centers have been added to the list of options available in Onondaga County.

You should take three simple steps before heading to one of OCRRA's battery drop-off locations:

1. Read your battery label and review the list of acceptable batteries (see page 2).
2. Use clear packing tape to cover the battery terminals or put each battery in a separate, sealed bag (see above).
3. Find a drop-off location near you (see chart at right). Put each battery in the slot labeled with your battery type (e.g., button/coin, single-use lithium and rechargeable batteries under 11 pounds).

OCRRA BATTERY DROP-OFF LOCATIONS

Civic Center
421 Montgomery St., Syracuse
(basement by escalator)

Wegmans
All Onondaga County stores
(foyer area)

Armond Magnarelli Community Center – *NEW!*
2308 Grant Blvd., Syracuse

Bob Cecile Community Center – *NEW!*
174 W. Seneca Turnpike, Syracuse

Green Hills Market
5933 S. Salina St., Syracuse

Southwest Community Center – *NEW!*
401 South Ave., Syracuse
(GPS: use zip code 13204, enter near Clover St.)

Syracuse Northeast Community Center – *NEW!*
716 Hawley Ave., Syracuse

New York State's Rechargeable Battery Law requires consumers to properly recycle rechargeable batteries. OCRRA's free drop-off sites accept batteries generated at home; they are not for batteries from a workplace. There are dozens of additional free drop-off locations throughout Onondaga County, operated by The Battery Network. Scan the QR code to the right to search additional locations.

Businesses have special considerations for managing batteries generated in a workplace. Businesses should visit OCRRA.org/batteries for guidance.

Please scan the QR code to find locations and review any drop-off guidelines from The Battery Network at **batterynetwork.org**

FACT: Learn how to recycle right in 15 minutes each month with our Monthly Resource Guide at OCRRA.org/events.

Recycling Rhoda





Battery Charging Safety

Dear Rhoda,

I'm hearing more about fires involving battery chargers. What are some tips I can share with my family at home to reduce the risks?

— Unsure in Salina

Dear Unsure,

You likely learned about basic fire safety in school and know not to play with sparklers next to a can of gas. As we electrify more of our gadgets with rechargeable batteries, it is time to update our fire safety education to include batteries.

The most common rechargeable battery type is lithium-ion. At least one study cited by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency suggests a failure rate of less than 1 in a million, but only when the battery is not abused.

Batteries and chargers with designs that have been cleared by independent safety labs (see logos below) include a BMS. Not the newest K-pop band, BMS stands for Battery Management System, which is a series of fail-safes engineered into devices to prevent fires. These features are why it is important to use the charger designed for your device and to avoid altering it. Many e-bike fires started with a battery in which the BMS was tampered with in order to make it go faster or run longer.

Maybe you didn't have plans to go Tony Stark on your rechargeable lawn mower, but many of us have fallen asleep with a plugged-in cell phone on our bed, which can be dangerous. Batteries should always be charged on a hard surface. When insulated by a soft surface, like your pillow - especially while charging, a thermal runaway event can occur. That's science-speak for heat overwhelming the BMS, resulting in a fire. In lithium-ion battery fires, the chemical reaction creates its own oxygen, so smothering won't extinguish a battery fire like it would a candle or grease fire.

Use rechargeable batteries to reduce single-use battery waste, save money and help the U.S. maintain a domestic supply of valuable metal from rechargeable batteries. However, charge them wisely and be sure to recycle them properly at drop-off locations, never in your recycle bin or trash where they can be crushed and ignite. Check out OCRRA.org/batteries for more information about proper battery management.

Signed,

Recycling Rhoda

Following safety tips from the National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA) is recommended:

- **Never put rechargeable batteries in curbside trash or recycling bins, where they can get crushed during pick-up and cause a fire.**
- Do not crush, puncture, or otherwise cause impact to a battery.
- Monitor batteries for swelling, smoking, popping, hissing or an odor.
- Charge items on a flat, dry surface, away from direct sunlight and bedding.
- Do not charge near exit paths, in case you need to escape the room.
- Never plug chargers into power strips or overloaded outlets.
- Do not charge at temperatures below 32˚F or above 105˚F.
- Do not overcharge batteries. Follow manufacturer charging instructions and promptly remove fully charged devices to prevent overheating.
- Be sure chargers have compatible strength and safety mechanisms with your device. The best way to do this is to use the original charger that came with your device.
- Pick batteries and chargers that have had their designs certified by independent safety labs. **Look for one of these labels on the device:**



UL CERTIFIED CE FC ETL Intertek

Look for these symbols for maximum safety. They indicate you have a battery or charger that has been cleared by independent safety labs.

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OCRRA's waste reduction, reuse and recycling program efforts (including this newsletter) are partially financed by a grant from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

Printed on Recycled Paper

FACT: Never put pool covers/liners or tarps in your recycling bin. They get caught up in machines that sort recyclables.

When in Doubt, Check it Out on OCRRA.org's New Battery Management Web Page

There are some types of batteries that do not belong at an OCRRA battery drop-off location, such as e-bike and car batteries or batteries that weigh over 11 pounds. If you need help figuring out how to manage a battery, OCRRA can lead you through the steps in the new battery management section on OCRRA.org.

First, read the label on your battery so you know what type you have. When you log onto OCRRA.org/batteries (scan the QR code to get there), you'll see three options: single use, rechargeable or DDR batteries. Read the descriptions and pick the box that matches your battery type. For example, single-use batteries cannot be recharged. Once they stop working, they can't power a device. Rechargeable batteries can be revived to continue powering a device. Tip: sometimes these batteries look alike. That's why it is important to read the label. DDR batteries are damaged, defective or recalled batteries.

Once an option is chosen, you'll be directed to examples of that category of batteries. Single-use batteries include alkaline, button and coin, or lithium (which is not the same as rechargeable lithium-ion batteries). Reading your battery label will help with this step.

Rechargeable batteries include small, mid and large-format batteries. In that section, you can get guidance for high-energy and e-mobility (e-bike/scooter) batteries, neither type is accepted at OCRRA's battery drop-off locations. Need to figure out your battery's watt hours? We'll show you how. Learn the signs that your battery is damaged (e.g., bulging, hissing, discoloration, odor) and what to do about it.

There are many resources to help Onondaga County residents learn more about their batteries and manage them properly.



Visit OCRRA.org/batteries to get started.

Scan the QR code or visit OCRRA.org/batteries to learn how to dispose of your batteries

Ask Alexa for Recycling Help With the New OCRRA Skill

OCRRA has a new tool to help you figure out what belongs in your trash and recycling bins. Ask Alexa! Open the OCRRA skill, ask your question and listen to the latest waste management guidance. Anyone can download the free Alexa app through their Amazon account. A paid Amazon Prime membership is not required.

Amazon developed Alexa as a voice-controlled assistant in your home, or on your phone. That means OCRRA can use the platform to share information or services through your voice commands. The tool offers hands-free convenience and more access to OCRRA's information for people with visual impairments.

New to Alexa? Customized apps on the platform are referred to as "skills." You MUST ask Alexa to open or enable the OCRRA skill each time you want our waste and recycling help. Otherwise, Alexa will search for, and provide, generic disposal information that does not apply to our community.

Remember, OCRRA is pronounced like the plant, okra. Still not sure? Replace the "p" in Oprah, with a "k" sound.

Don't have an Alexa device at home? Use your smartphone!

1-Download the Alexa app.

2-Sign into your Amazon account or create one for free.

3-Say: *"Alexa, open the OCRRA skill."*

4-When your phone announces the OCRRA skill is open, you're in! Ask Alexa how to recycle aluminum foil, milk jugs or another item.

Already have an Alexa device?

Depending on the type of device (and Amazon account) you have, Amazon may require different phrases to open a skill. Test these prompts to find the one that works:

"Alexa, open OCRRA."

"Alexa, open the OCRRA skill."

"Alexa, enable OCRRA."



FACT: Find recycling and reuse guidance in eight languages in the multilingual resources section of OCRRA.org.

OCRRA Compost and Mulch Reminders

BUY COMPOST

Help plants grow better by adding nutrients to soil and retaining moisture with OCRRA compost. This all-natural soil amendment is made locally using food scraps and yard waste.

- **Trunk Load** (Car, van, and SUV owners hand load their trunk): $10
- **Cubic Yard** (OCRRA loads your truck or trailer):
  - 1/2" Screened - $16 / cu. yd. only at Jamesville Compost Site.
  - 1/4" Premium - $20 / cu. yd. only at Amboy Compost Site
- **Bag** (1 cu. ft.) 1/4" Compost:
  - Visit either OCRRA Compost Site - $5 each or 5 bags for $20
  - Visit local shops that sell our bagged compost. Prices vary. Visit OCRRA.org/compostretailers or scan the QR code below.

Scan the code for a list of compost bag retailers



2026 COMPOST SITE PASS

Drop off unlimited food scraps and yard waste all year with an OCRRA Compost Site Pass. The $25 pass is only available to residents of Onondaga County. It comes with two FREE bags of OCRRA Premium Compost. Food and yard waste are accepted at Amboy and Jamesville Compost Sites. Food scraps can also be dropped off at Rock Cut Road Transfer Station during residential hours. Visit a compost site to buy a pass in-person or go to **OCRRA.org/shop** to order a pass online.

BUY MULCH

Suppress weeds, retain moisture (so you don't have to water as much) and give your garden or landscaping a finished look by adding OCRRA wood mulch.

- **Trunk Load** (Car, van, and SUV owners hand load their trunk): $5
- **Cubic Yard** (OCRRA loads your truck or trailer):
  - Double Ground Mulch - $14 / cu. yd. only at Jamesville Compost Site.
  - Triple Ground Mulch - $16 / cu. yd. at both sites.

DID YOU KNOW?

No site pass is needed to buy compost or mulch!

Amboy Compost Site accepts cash, checks or credit cards. Jamesville Compost Site accepts cash or checks.

Commercial customers are encouraged to visit OCRRA.org to review 2026 delivery fees.

Need to haul large volumes of compost or mulch from OCRRA, but don't have the right vehicle? Contact a hauler that can help you out!

Scan here to find haulers or visit OCRRA.org/organics.

**Haulers are not endorsed, licensed, or contracted by OCRRA.*



Never put recyclables in plastic or paper bags!

Bagged recyclables can't be separated by sorting machines and get tangled around the equipment.



FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM!

Enjoy photos, videos and great tips to reduce, reuse and recycle on our **NEW** Instagram page. Find us at: **instagram.com/ocrra.cny**

WE'RE ALSO ON FACEBOOK!

Find us at: **facebook.com/OCRRA**

FACT: Composting can divert roughly 20% of our community's waste to gardens, landscaping and other uses.

From the Executive Director's Desk…

OCRRA Executive Director Retires After Decades of Public Service

Kevin Spillane serves his final day with the Agency on April 3, 2026

For the past four years, page 7 of this newsletter has been devoted to quarterly messages from OCRRA's Executive Director, Kevin Spillane. He has shared information about food waste, recycling legislation, waste-to-energy operations, the need to expand OCRRA's Ley Creek site and many other topics that are important to our community. The articles were often reflective, drawing from 44 years of experience in public management. That knowledge and insight will be sorely missed as we devote this page to Spillane one more time, for a fond farewell. We knew he had to retire, eventually.

"My career has always been dedicated to public service. I am proud of the people that I have worked beside over the last decade at OCRRA, helping the residents of Onondaga County"

A lifelong resident of Central New York and the Finger Lakes region, Spillane earned a Master of Public Administration degree from Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs.

"I chose to work in solid waste because I recognized the challenges for local governments in implementing the new source separation law in the late 1980s, and the difficulty of managing local recycling programs," Spillane says. He went on to develop and operate recycling programs in Seneca and Ontario Counties. He also oversaw a 1,200 ton per day landfill, site expansions and multi-million-dollar upgrades.

For more than a decade, Spillane took a break from waste management, when he oversaw the business operations of a not-for-profit that provided employment to individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Returning to his waste management roots, Spillane spent six years as OCRRA's Director of Transfer Operations before being promoted to the role of Executive Director in January 2022. "With OCRRA, it has always been about building up the Agency's infrastructure and working with a dedicated team to manage all of the solid waste management programs here," he says. Spillane led Rock Cut Road Transfer Station through major renovations. When Ley Creek Transfer Station closed, services were moved to Rock Cut Road within one day, during the pandemic.

Spillane always had a bigger vision for Onondaga County's waste management system, with the goal of expanding waste disposal capacity within the community. As Executive Director, he worked hard to secure additional land surrounding the Ley Creek facility, paving the way for OCRRA to reimagine the area as a comprehensive solid waste management campus, in the future. He also championed the transition from blue bins to lidded recycling carts, understanding the value of extra room for recyclables at the curb.



OCRRA Executive Director Kevin Spillane retires, ending a 44-year career in public management. He spent a decade overseeing municipal solid waste services in Onondaga County.

"OCRRA's Board, staff and extended network of partners have grown stronger under Kevin Spillane's leadership," says Corey Driscoll Dunham, the Chair of OCRRA's Board of Directors. "While Kevin will no longer be with OCRRA to see most of his visions come to life, the impact of his work will be felt for generations to come."

"My career has always been dedicated to public service. I am proud of the people that I have worked beside over the last decade at OCRRA, helping the residents of Onondaga County," Spillane says. His many years of service are admired and appreciated by those who have worked beside him.

Readers who have enjoyed Spillane's articles in this newsletter won't be surprised to learn about his love for writing. In addition to authoring a non-fiction book and co-writing a textbook, he published five novels that fans can still find on Amazon. As Spillane begins a well-deserved retirement, OCRRA's Board of Directors will oversee the search for the Agency's next Executive Director.



Photo Credit: OCRRA, Syracuse, 2025

OCRRA Board Chair Corey Driscoll Dunham, Executive Director Kevin Spillane and Recycling Director Kristen Lawton pick up neighborhood litter during an Adopt-a-Block kickoff event in Syracuse.

FACT: Interested in joining the team? Visit our employment page at OCRRA.org/jobs to see the latest opportunities.

Register Now for the 2026 OCRRA Earth Day Litter Cleanup

Join us for this wonderful community event on Friday, April 24, and Saturday, April 25

Earth Day is almost here and it is time to come together for a cleaner, healthier community. Gather gloves, litter grabbers and garbage bags to join thousands of volunteers for **OCRRA's Earth Day Litter Cleanup on Friday, April 24, and Saturday, April 25**. This annual event is more than just picking up litter; it is a chance for neighbors, families, friends and coworkers across Onondaga County to come together and take care of Earth.

There are a few important dates and decisions to keep in mind as you get started. Before you register, please be ready to answer the following questions:

- Would you like to participate as an individual or organize a team? Only group leaders need to register their team.
- How many people are in your group?
- What day(s) will you be cleaning? The event takes place on Friday, April 24, and Saturday, April 25. You can choose one day or both!
- What area in Onondaga County are you cleaning? Determine specific streets, intersections, block numbers, park names, etc.
- Which city, town or village will you be cleaning in Onondaga County? This will affect where you dispose of your litter.

Because OCRRA needs time to gather and mail materials, the **registration deadline is Tuesday, April 14. Online registration at OCRRA.org/EarthDay is preferred. If that's not possible, you may register over the phone by calling (315) 453-2866**.

In mid-April, OCRRA will mail stickers to volunteers to put on collected bags of litter, along with disposal instructions. Drop-off locations depend on the cleanup site and local municipal guidelines.

Bagged litter with official Earth Day stickers attached can be dropped off for free at designated locations during the event.

Your efforts make a big difference. Since 1994, volunteers have collected more than 3 million pounds of litter through this event. Each bag picked up represents community pride, teamwork and a shared commitment to keeping Onondaga County beautiful.

Registration deadline is Tuesday, April 14. Scan the QR code to register online or visit OCRRA.org/EarthDay







(Top Right) Members of Community Living Advocates cleaned up around Silver Fox Adult Day Center in Baldwinsville during last year's event. (Bottom Right) Volunteers with Friends of Schiller Park in Syracuse joined hundreds of groups that formed cleanup crews in 2025. (Left) Young Karson joined his mom last year to clean up the Dewitt Town Hall playground, part of the Shoppingtown Mall parking lot and a section along the Erie Canal Trail.

Mark Your Calendar

EARTH DAY LITTER CLEANUP	PAINT RECYCLING DROP-OFF	ELECTRONICS DROP-OFF	HOLIDAY SCHEDULE
APRIL 24-25	MAY 30	APRIL 11	MAY 25 & JULY 3-4
Details Above	North Syracuse	Syracuse	All OCRRA Sites
Registration Required	Registration Required	Registration Required	Closed
www.OCRRA.org/EarthDay	www.OCRRA.org/events	www.OCRRA.org/events	www.OCRRA.org/locations

FACT: **Volunteers collected more than 120,000 pounds of litter during OCRRA's 2025 Earth Day Cleanup event.**