



An Extended Guide · No. 1677

Safe Battery Disposal and Recycling

Never the trash —
here's where they go

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! Read this first — a few battery-safety basics

A battery stores a lot of energy in a small package, so a few plain habits keep everyone safe — no matter the chemistry. Charge with the charger made for that exact battery, on a hard, non-flammable surface, and never charge one that is swollen, cracked, leaking, hot, or wet. Keep batteries away from open flame, sparks, and high heat, and give a lead-acid battery plenty of fresh air while it charges, because it can give off explosive hydrogen gas. Never puncture, crush, short the two terminals together, or throw a battery in a fire. Around lead-acid batteries wear eye protection — the acid inside can burn skin and eyes. And when any battery finally wears out, it does not belong in the household trash: batteries are recycled at the right drop-off, never thrown away. The reassuring part is that the LiFePO₄ chemistry — also written LFP — inside most of today's power stations and backup batteries is one of the safest and most stable there is. This guide covers that last habit in full — getting a worn-out battery to the right drop-off, safely and, more often than not, for free.

Batteries never belong in the trash

When a battery finally wears out, it has one more important trip to make — to a recycling drop-off, never the curb. This guide shows you exactly where they go and how to get them there safely.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. One of the most common questions I get once a power station or an old car battery gives up is a simple one: 'Bill, what on earth do I do with this thing?' It's a good question, and the answer is easier — and usually cheaper — than most folks expect.

Here's the short version: a dead battery is not garbage. It's a small bundle of valuable, recyclable material that also happens to need a little respect on the way out the door. Toss it in the household trash and it can start a fire in the truck or at the sorting plant. Take it to the right spot and it gets a whole new life.

★ No question is too small

If you're staring at a worn-out battery and aren't sure where it should go, just call or text me at (330) 200-8042. I'll point you to the right kind of drop-off, no charge for a quick question.

The 60-second version

If you remember nothing else from this guide, remember these.

- ❑ No battery belongs in the household trash or the curbside recycling bin.
- ❑ Loose batteries can start fires in garbage trucks and sorting plants — that's the real reason.
- ❑ Lead-acid batteries, like a car battery, go back to an auto-parts store or recycler, often for a small refund.
- ❑ Lithium packs and power stations go to a battery or electronics drop-off, or a household hazardous waste day.
- ❑ Cover the terminals of loose batteries with tape before you transport them.
- ❑ A swollen, leaking, or damaged battery needs special handling — call the drop-off first.
- ❑ Don't let dead batteries pile up loose in a drawer.

✓ You don't have to do it today

Set worn-out batteries aside somewhere cool and safe, terminals taped, and make one recycling run when it's convenient. There's no rush — just don't let the trash be the answer.

Why a battery can't go in the trash

It's not red tape — it's a genuine fire-safety issue, and once you've seen why, you'll never toss one again.

Every battery holds stored energy, even a 'dead' one. When batteries get tumbled together with metal and moisture in a garbage truck or at a recycling plant, their terminals can touch and short out. That spark, next to paper and plastic, is all it takes to start a fire — and those fires are a serious, growing problem for the crews who handle our waste.

Lithium batteries carry the most energy for their size, so they're the biggest concern, but even old lead-acid batteries hold acid and lead that shouldn't end up in a landfill. Curbside recycling bins aren't set up for either one, so batteries don't belong there either.

! This is the whole reason for the rules

The drop-offs and take-back programs exist to keep batteries out of trucks and landfills, where they cause fires and leak harmful material. Using them is genuinely doing your neighbors a favor.

Two families, two paths

Almost every battery you'll need to get rid of is one of two kinds, and each has its own easy path.

Knowing which family you're holding tells you where it should go. If you're not sure, the label usually says — and when in doubt, a battery or electronics drop-off can steer you right.

The battery	Where it goes
A car, truck, or mower battery	An auto-parts store or a scrap-metal recycler
AGM or sealed lead-acid (many UPS units)	Treated like any lead-acid — the same places
A power station or built-in lithium pack	A battery or electronics recycling drop-off
Loose lithium, tool, or gadget batteries	A store take-back box or a hazardous waste day

The rest of this guide walks each of these paths in turn, starting with the old, familiar lead-acid battery.

Lead-acid: the core return

The old lead-acid battery has the easiest, and often the most rewarding, path of all.

Lead-acid is one of the most recycled products in the whole country — nearly all of every old one becomes a new one. That's why so many auto-parts stores and battery shops will happily take yours back, and many will hand you a small refund called a 'core charge' when you do.

A core charge is a deposit built into the price of a new battery. Bring the old one back and you get that money returned. Even if you're not buying a new battery, most parts stores and scrap-metal recyclers will still take an old lead-acid battery off your hands, because the material is worth recovering.

- Keep the battery upright so none of the acid can spill.
- Carry it by a proper strap or with two hands — lead-acid batteries are heavy.
- Ask about a core refund if you're replacing it.
- A quick phone call first confirms they take it and saves you a wasted trip.

✓ Save the receipt for a core refund

If you paid a core charge when you bought the battery, bringing the old one back to that same retailer is usually the surest way to get your deposit returned.

Lithium and power-station packs

The lithium batteries in modern power stations, tools, and gadgets have their own easy drop-offs — you just have to know to look for them.

Unlike lead-acid, you usually won't get a refund for a lithium battery, but recycling one is just as important and often just as convenient. Many home-improvement stores, electronics stores, and hardware stores host a battery take-back box near the entrance, and your county holds household hazardous waste collection days for the rest.

A portable power station is really just a big, well-built lithium battery in a case, so it goes the lithium route too. Because it's larger, it's worth a phone call ahead to ask how they'd like you to bring it in — whole, or handled some particular way.

- Look for a battery drop-off box at home-improvement, hardware, and electronics stores.
- Watch for your county's household hazardous waste days, which take the bigger items.
- Tape the terminals of any loose lithium battery before it travels (more on that soon).
- For a whole power station, call ahead so you know exactly what they'll accept.

★ Not sure if yours is lithium?

If the label's worn off or the jargon's confusing, snap a photo and text it to me at (330) 200-8042 — I'll tell you which path it takes.

The small batteries around the house, too

While you're at it, the little batteries in drawers and remotes deserve the same care.

The same rules apply all the way down to the small stuff. Rechargeable batteries — the kind in cordless tools, laptops, and many gadgets — should always be recycled, and the flat 'button' cells in watches, hearing aids, and key fobs are best recycled too, because they can hold a surprising charge.

Ordinary single-use alkaline batteries, your everyday AAs and AAAs, are less of a hazard, but many folks like to recycle those as well rather than trash them. A battery take-back box will happily sort them all — and it keeps that drawer from turning into a fire risk.

- Rechargeable and lithium batteries: always recycle.
- Button and coin cells: recycle, and tape them — they still hold a charge.
- Everyday alkaline AAs and AAAs: recycling is a fine habit, and take-back boxes accept them.

Tape the terminals first

This one small habit is the single best thing you can do to keep loose batteries safe on their way to recycling.

A battery's terminals are the two contact points where its energy comes out. If something metal bridges across them — another battery, a coin, a set of keys — it creates a short circuit, which means heat, sparks, and a fire risk. Covering the terminals with a strip of tape blocks that path completely.

- Use clear packing tape, electrical tape, or even a bit of masking tape.
- Cover the metal terminals or the exposed ends fully.
- Bag each larger loose battery on its own if you can.
- This matters most for lithium and button cells, but it's smart for any loose battery.

! Never let terminals touch metal

Loose batteries rattling together in a bag or box, or against tools and coins, is exactly what starts a fire. Tape first, then transport — every time.

Getting them there safely

A worn-out battery is easy to move once you've taken a few simple precautions.

Most of getting a battery to a drop-off is just common sense, but a little planning makes it tidy and safe. Keep batteries cool and dry until the trip, carry lead-acid batteries upright, and don't let a pile of loose cells jostle around together.

- Store worn-out batteries somewhere cool, dry, and out of reach of kids and pets until recycling day.
- Keep lead-acid batteries upright so acid can't spill.
- Tape the terminals of loose batteries and keep them from touching one another.
- Take them in a sturdy box or bin, not a thin plastic bag that could tear.
- Don't leave batteries baking in a hot car for days — heat is hard on them.

✓ One trip, not many

Gather your worn-out batteries in one safe spot and make a single recycling run. It saves you time and keeps them from lingering where they shouldn't.

A swollen or damaged battery

A battery that's bulging, leaking, cracked, or hot needs a gentler touch and a phone call before it goes anywhere.

Most batteries you recycle will simply be worn out and perfectly calm. But now and then one shows real distress — a lithium battery that's puffy or swollen, or a lead-acid battery that's cracked or leaking. Those need special handling, and the recycler or hazardous-waste site would much rather you call ahead than surprise them.

- Don't charge it, use it, puncture it, or press on it.
- Move it, gently, to a cool spot away from anything that can burn.
- For a lead-acid leak, keep it upright and avoid touching the acid — wear gloves and eye protection.
- Call the drop-off or your county's hazardous waste program and ask how they want it handled.

! When in doubt, make the call

A damaged battery isn't something to just drop in a take-back box. A quick phone call to the recycler or hazardous-waste site tells you exactly how to bring it in safely. Our guide on the signs of a failing battery covers spotting trouble early.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Getting a battery recycled looks a little different depending on where you live — but the safe-handling habits are the same everywhere.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, a recycling drop-off is usually close by, which makes the whole thing a quick errand.

- Auto-parts stores, hardware stores, and electronics stores with take-back boxes are often just a short drive.
- You can make small, frequent trips, so batteries never pile up at home.
- Household hazardous waste days are typically held at nearby, central locations.
- A worn-out power station or car battery can go out with your next regular errand.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country on a well, drop-offs are farther apart, so a little planning saves you repeated trips down the road.

- Gather worn-out batteries in one cool, safe, terminals-taped spot and make one trip when you're already headed to town.
- Barns, garages, and outbuildings swing hot and cold — don't let batteries sit and bake there for months.
- Rural folks often run more lead-acid and deep-cycle batteries (tractors, mowers, well and solar setups), so core refunds can add up.
- Call ahead before a long drive to be sure the site takes what you're bringing.

★ I can help you plan a run

If you've got a mix of old batteries piling up in the garage, I'm glad to help you sort what goes where before you drive anywhere. Call (330) 200-8042.

Please don't stockpile them

A drawer or box full of dead batteries feels harmless, but it's worth clearing out.

It's a natural habit — a battery dies, you don't know what to do with it, so it goes in a drawer 'for now.' The trouble is that a pile of loose batteries, especially with untaped terminals, is exactly the kind of thing that can short out and overheat. The longer they sit, the more they can corrode and leak, too.

The fix is simple: keep one small, non-metal container in a cool spot for worn-out batteries, tape their terminals as they go in, and empty it at a drop-off a couple of times a year. That way nothing piles up and nothing turns into a hazard.

! A junk drawer of batteries is a real risk

Loose batteries with bare terminals, mixed in with paperclips, coins, and keys, can short against that metal. If you've got a drawer like that, taping the terminals today is a five-minute job well worth doing.

Keep worn-out batteries away from little hands

Batteries waiting for recycling should be somewhere children and pets can't reach — especially the small, shiny ones.

A worn-out battery still holds a charge, and small button or coin cells — the flat, silver ones from watches, hearing aids, remotes, and greeting cards — are easy for a curious child or pet to pick up and swallow. That's a genuine emergency. It's the main reason I nudge folks not to leave batteries sitting loose on a counter or in an easy-to-reach drawer while they wait for recycling day.

- Store batteries for recycling up high or in a closed container, out of reach.
- Take extra care with button and coin cells — keep them taped and contained.
- If you ever suspect a child or pet has swallowed a battery, treat it as an emergency and get medical help right away.

! Small batteries, big caution

Button and coin cells are the ones to watch most closely. Keep them taped, contained, and well out of reach from the moment they leave the device until they reach the drop-off.

Finding a drop-off here in Portage County

You've got good options close to home — the trick is a quick call before you go.

Right here in Portage County, the usual suspects work well: many auto-parts stores take back lead-acid batteries, several home-improvement and electronics stores keep a battery take-back box near the door, and the county runs a household hazardous waste program with collection days for the bigger and trickier items.

I won't list specific stores, hours, or addresses here, because those change and I'd hate to send you on a wrong turn. Instead, make one quick phone call first — ask 'Do you take this kind of battery, and is there anything I should do before I bring it in?' That two-minute call saves the trip.

- Many auto-parts stores: lead-acid batteries, often with a core refund.
- Home-improvement, hardware, and electronics stores: look for a battery take-back box.
- Your county's household hazardous waste program: collection days for lithium packs and the bigger items.
- Always call ahead to confirm what they accept and how they want it prepared.

★ I keep an ear to the ground locally

Because I'm out helping folks all over Portage County, I usually know which nearby spots are taking what. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and I'll point you somewhere close.

What recycling actually does

Here's the cheerful part: your worn-out battery is the raw material for the next one.

Recycling a battery isn't just tidy disposal — it's genuinely useful. A lead-acid battery is broken down and nearly all of it — the lead, the plastic case, even the acid — is recovered and made into new products, often new batteries. It's one of the great recycling success stories.

Lithium recycling is newer but growing fast, and it recovers valuable metals that would otherwise have to be mined from scratch. Every pack that goes to the right place keeps those materials in use and keeps them out of the landfill. So when you make that drop-off, you're closing a loop, not just clearing a shelf.

✓ A small act that adds up

Batteries are heavy with recoverable material. Recycling even a few a year genuinely helps — and it's the kind of quiet good habit that's easy to feel good about.

UPS boxes and sealed lead-acid

The battery backup for your computer or internet has its own worn-out battery inside, and it recycles like any other.

A UPS — the box that keeps your computer or internet modem running through a blip — usually holds a sealed AGM lead-acid battery. Those wear out after a few years, and the UPS will beep or warn you when the battery needs replacing. The old one recycles right alongside any other lead-acid battery.

Some newer UPS units and many gadgets use lithium instead, so if you're unsure which you've got, treat it as lithium and use a battery drop-off to be safe. Either way, it doesn't go in the trash. Our UPS guide covers replacing the battery itself.

- A worn-out UPS battery is usually sealed lead-acid — recycle it like a car battery.
- Newer units may be lithium — if unsure, use a lithium drop-off.
- Tape the terminals of the old battery before it travels.

Common mistakes to avoid

Most disposal slip-ups come from not knowing the rules, not from carelessness — so here they are.

- **Tossing a battery in the household trash** — the fire risk that started this whole guide.
- **Dropping batteries in the curbside recycling bin** — those bins aren't set up for batteries, and it's dangerous.
- **Leaving terminals bare** during transport, so they can short against metal.
- **Letting dead batteries pile up** loose in a drawer for years.
- **Trying to open, crush, or 'drain' a battery** yourself before recycling — never do this.

! Never take a battery apart

Whatever you do, don't try to pry open, puncture, or burn a battery to 'deal with it.' That's genuinely dangerous. Recyclers have the equipment to do it safely — your only job is to get it to them intact.

Getting a battery ready to recycle

A worn-out battery takes only a minute to prepare for its trip.

There's nothing complicated here — just a short routine that keeps everything safe between your shelf and the drop-off.

- Stop using and charging it once you've decided it's done.
- Let it cool if it's been in use, and wipe off any dust or grime.
- Cover the terminals or exposed ends with tape.
- Keep lead-acid upright; bag or box loose batteries so they can't touch.
- Set it in your cool, safe recycling spot until the next run.
- Call your chosen drop-off to confirm they take it and how they'd like it.

✓ Do it the moment it dies

The easiest time to tape and set aside a battery is right when you retire it. Handle it once, safely, and it's ready whenever your recycling run comes around.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most about getting rid of an old battery.

Q: Can I really not just throw a battery away?

Right — batteries don't belong in the household trash or the curbside bin. The main reason is fire safety: batteries short out and spark when they're tumbled together with metal in trucks and sorting plants. A drop-off is the safe answer, and it's usually free and close by.

Q: Does it cost money to recycle a battery?

Usually not. Auto-parts stores often take lead-acid batteries free and may even refund a core deposit. Store take-back boxes for lithium and small batteries are free. Household hazardous waste days are typically free to residents. Recycling is rarely the expensive option.

Q: What do I do with a whole power station I'm done with?

Treat it as a large lithium battery. Call a battery or electronics recycler, or your county's hazardous waste program, and ask how they'd like you to bring it in. Because it's big, a quick call ahead saves confusion at the door.

Q: Do I really need to tape the terminals?

For loose lithium and button batteries, yes — it's the simplest way to prevent a short and a fire on the trip. For a big lead-acid battery with posts, it's less critical but still a fine habit. When in doubt, tape it.

Q: What if my battery is swollen or leaking?

Handle it gently, keep it away from anything that can burn, don't charge or puncture it, and call the drop-off or hazardous-waste site before you bring it in. A damaged battery needs special handling, and they'll tell you exactly what to do.

★ Got a battery I didn't cover?

There's no such thing as a silly question here. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and I'll help you figure out where it should go.

A recycling-day checklist

When you're ready to make a run, here's a simple list to run through.

- ☐ Gather the worn-out batteries from your one safe holding spot.
- ☐ Check that every terminal is taped and nothing metal is touching them.
- ☐ Keep lead-acid batteries upright in a sturdy box or bin.
- ☐ Set any swollen or damaged battery aside — call the site about that one first.
- ☐ Call ahead to confirm the drop-off takes what you're bringing.
- ☐ Ask about a core refund if you're returning a lead-acid battery.
- ☐ Make the trip, and enjoy the tidy shelf you're left with.

✓ Keep this page on the shelf

Tape this list where you keep your batteries. A quick glance beats trying to remember every step.

Where to go next

Recycling is the last chapter of a battery's life — here's where the rest of the story lives.

- Wondering if a battery is truly done? Our guide on the signs of a failing battery helps you decide.
- Want to make batteries last longer in the first place? See our battery-life and storage guides.
- Curious why a swollen lithium battery is such a concern? Our safety-and-fire-prevention guide explains.
- Replacing a UPS battery? Our UPS guide walks you through it.

You don't have to read them in order, and you don't have to read them all. Follow whatever question is on your mind today — each guide stands on its own.

You don't have to do this alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person is one call away.

I hope this guide made safe battery disposal and recycling feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything.

When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. I don't do licensed electrical work or open up sealed battery packs myself — for anything hardwired, or for panel work, I'll help you line up a trustworthy local pro.

★ Bill's Home Tech — real help, close to home

Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you're ever not 100% happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's a promise. — Bill

Two Paths to Recycling

Lead-acid and lithium, side by side

	Lead-Acid	Lithium (LFP)
Where it goes	Auto-parts store	Battery drop-off
Often	Core refund	Free take-back
Before you go	Keep upright	Tape terminals
Recyclability	Very high	High

Neither belongs in the trash — each has an easy drop-off.

From Worn-Out to Recycled

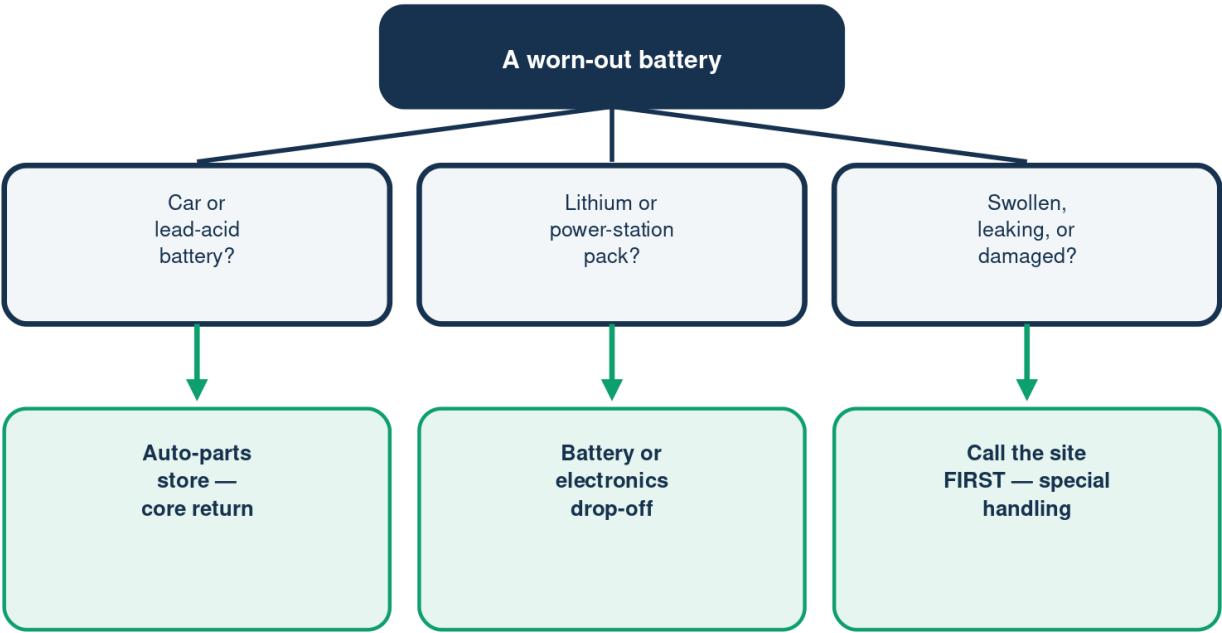
A few simple steps, none of them a rush



Handle each battery once, safely, and you're done.

Where Does This Battery Go?

A starting point, not the final word



When in doubt, call your county's household hazardous waste program.

Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.

Trash or Recycled Right?

Why the drop-off is always the answer

	In the Trash	Recycled Right
Fire risk	A real danger	Kept safe
Materials	Wasted	Recovered
The rules	Often broken	Followed
Cost to you	Hidden harm	Usually free

The right drop-off is safer, greener, and usually free.



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— Bill

Prefer help without a visit?

Bill can screen-share and fix many things remotely — a flat \$49, free for Support Plan members.



A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

— *Bill*



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