



George Latimer
County Executive

Department of Emergency Services

Richard G. Wishnie
Commissioner

Susan B. Spear
Deputy Commissioner

July 7, 2023

Dear County Executive Latimer,

I write in support of your proposed County legislation regarding Lithium Ion Batteries. As one of the Deputy Fire Coordinators for the Cause and Origin Team at DES, I am very concerned about the increasing prevalence of devices with Lithium Ion Batteries. When these batteries fail it is in an almost explosive manner, creating extraordinarily high heat as well as a variety of toxic and flammable fumes, making these fires very difficult to control and civilians to escape. The significant increase in fires nationwide involving lithium ion batteries, including fatal fires, is only going to continue to grow, further endangering those in Westchester County.

Our Cause and Origin Team has responded to approximately one dozen fires over the past year where a lithium ion battery was involved as the cause of the fire and even more where it was affected by the fire. All of these cells need to be accounted for as they present a hazard to our fire investigators even after the fire has been extinguished, as heat damaged cells can fail later causing this hazard to exist until the cell is properly contained.

I appreciate the County taking action to help prevent Lithium Ion Battery related fires. The proposed County legislation to require safety standards for e-bikes and other mobility devices sold within the County, to prohibit the use or sale of reassembled or reconditioned batteries, to require point of sale warning notices, and to develop a public education and outreach campaign, will go a long way towards reducing the fire risk caused by these batteries in our community.

Further, the members of our Cause and Origin Team appreciates the County spearheading the efforts to create a battery disposal program. This will help provide the fire departments and local residents with a solution to the issue of proper, and safe, battery disposal.

On behalf of the Cause and Origin Team, we strongly support this legislation, and we are glad that Westchester County is taking a leadership role on this important and growing safety problem.

Sincerely,

James F. Cuffe
Deputy Fire Coordinator – Cause and Origin Team

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