

SB 501 –Producer Responsibility for Medium-Format Batteries

SENATOR BEN ALLEN

Fact Sheet

SUMMARY

SB 501 will expand California’s extended producer responsibility (EPR) program for loose batteries to include medium-format batteries, such as those found in e-bikes, outdoor lawn equipment, and portable power systems.

BACKGROUND

Batteries are a significant source of household hazardous waste and pose significant safety risks when improperly managed. For instance, small batteries from cell phones have [caused dangerous trash fires](#), and certain e-bike batteries were [recently issued a product safety warning](#) by the US Consumer Product Safety Commission due to the risk of ignition and explosion.

Municipal solid waste entities are required to provide for safe collection of household hazardous waste, and these products are technically prohibited from being sent to landfills. However, consumers often face inadequate access to convenient collection options from their local jurisdiction, which can increase the chance of improper and dangerous disposal. Local jurisdictions are also facing significant fiscal burdens from the cost of proper collection and disposal of these products, which are increasing in the waste stream.

In 2022, [AB 2440 \(Irwin\)](#) and [SB 1215 \(Newman\)](#) established programs to promote the safe and proper collection and management of small loose batteries and battery-embedded products, respectively. AB 2440 required the producers of household batteries to either comply individually or through a stewardship program for the collection and recycling of these batteries, through an EPR framework. This includes planning for a specific number of collection sites, minimum recycling efficiency rates, and outreach and education. SB 1215 extended the consumer-facing fee of the e-waste program to additional products to pay for disposal costs.

EPR refers to a policy framework that places shared or full responsibility on managing the end-of-life of a product on to the producers of that product and entities in

the product chain, rather than on local governments and consumers. The framework usually entails a producer responsibility organization (PRO) made up of industry companies, which develops and implements a plan for end-of-life management under oversight of a public entity. EPR can also incentivize producers to make more sustainable product design choices.

Medium-format batteries were not included in AB 2440 and are only included in the SB 1215 program if they are embedded in the product, meaning they are not easily removable by the consumer. However, many medium-format batteries in products are designed to be easily removed by the consumer, and have been increasing in both the marketplace and waste stream as products such as [e-bikes become more popular](#).

States including Vermont, Illinois, Washington, Connecticut, Colorado, and Nebraska have all included medium-format batteries in recently enacted EPR programs for batteries, allowing for efficiencies in distributing costs for program administration amongst battery producers and implementing the program.

SOLUTION

SB 501 expands the batteries covered under AB 2440’s EPR program to those up to 25 pounds in order to include batteries typically considered “medium format.” The bill would also clarify that a key or locking device to prevent theft would not preclude a battery from being considered a loose battery covered under the program as long as the battery meets other criteria for being easily removable by a consumer.

SUPPORT

National Stewardship Action Council
Rural County Representative of California
Resource Recovery Coalition of California
Californians Against Waste
California Product Stewardship Council
Rethink Waste

CONTACT

Laurel Brodzinsky | Office of Senator Ben Allen
Laurel.Brodzinsky@sen.ca.gov; (916) 651-4024

