

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)
Solid Waste Advisory Committee
June 22, 2023 - 10:00 am
Meeting Summary

The meeting featured updates on upcoming MassDEP job postings, recent fires at solid waste facilities associated with lithium-ion batteries, the Recycling Market Development Workgroup, Minimum Performance Standard data from Construction and Demolition processing facilities, wood markets, the Deconstruction Workgroup, and the 2022 Waste Characterization Studies.

Question: Any tips on making it easy/convenient for folks to properly tape lithium-ion batteries? Are people using signage in collection areas, etc.?

Response: The smart recycling guide on Recycle Smart MA is being updated to reflect the top five “no items,” including batteries, propane tanks and sharps. It will also be translated into seven different languages.

Comment: One option is to tape the ends. Another is to bag the batteries individually.

Comment: Look to Europe. They have regulated how lithium-ion batteries are handled at end-of-life.

Comment: Promoting Right to Repair would be a way to reduce disposal of items containing lithium-ion batteries. The disposal of personal electronics is alarming.

Link to recent report: <https://pirg.org/edfund/resources/chromebook-churn-report-highlights-problems-of-short-lived-laptops-in-schools/>

Comment: The Department of Energy offers a grant to assist state and local governments with battery recycling, collection and reprocessing programs. Maybe there’s an opportunity for Massachusetts.

Link: <https://eere-exchange.energy.gov/Default.aspx>

Comment: Staples recently updated the list of batteries they accept. The updated list includes single-use alkaline, non-rechargeable lithium, rechargeable Nickel cadmium (Ni-Cd), lithium-ion (Li-Ion), small, sealed lead acid (SSLA/Pb), nickel metal hydride (Ni-MH), and nickel zinc (Ni-ZN).

Link: <https://www.staples.com/stores/recycling#whatcanberecycledinstore>

Clarification: Among the potential upcoming job postings at MassDEP, one is intended to focus on Recycling Market Development, one on the Reduce and Reuse Plan, and the others for Waste Ban compliance: conducting inspections, enforcement and outreach.

Comment: Cartons are 100 percent recyclable in theory, but need to go to specialty mills that are far away. In addition, they are a very small percentage of the materials collected at material recovery facilities, so it takes a long time to collect enough of them to ship (and while they sit, they deteriorate which can cause odor issues). So while cartons have a lot of recyclability potential, they are not economical to recycle in Massachusetts yet.

Comment: We need a better education campaign around Waste Bans. The recent C&D data reflects a lack of compliance. It starts with education and ends with penalties.

Comment: Register for the Sept 20, 2023 Deconstruction Working Group.

Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUuf-GpqjktG9MHkmgV8fLqAka5TCHkKP9#/registration>

Question: Is there a document on the MassDEP website that consolidates individual Waste Characterization Studies (broken down by each category)? I can see all the individual studies here: <https://www.mass.gov/guides/municipal-waste-combustors>

Answer: There is a spreadsheet file that includes the data across all five of the study years with categorization by both primary material category and detail material category.

Link: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/summary-of-waste-combustor-class-ii-recycling-program-waste-characterization-studies/download>

Question: Do we compare ourselves to other states as peers? If so, which?

Answer: MassDEP has looked at waste characterization data from other states over the years. The overall categorization of the waste is pretty similar to what we have in Massachusetts.