# Leeds issues urgent warning after fires break out in bin lorries linked to barbecues and batteries



Leeds City Council has recently issued an urgent warning to residents concerning a spate of fires that have erupted in the back of bin lorries during routine waste collections. The incidents occurred in the areas of Burmantofts, Armley, and Middleton, where smoke was reported billowing from the vehicles on three separate occasions. Each situation necessitated the intervention of the fire service to manage the emergencies, as crews had to offload smouldering waste onto the road for safe extinguishment.

The fires were reportedly linked to improperly disposed items, particularly disposable barbecues and batteries associated with electronic devices such as vapes. Councillor Mohammed Rafique, the council’s executive member for climate, energy, environment, and green space, emphasised the dangers posed by even minor ignition sources. “Fires in bin wagons or at recycling centres can be started from the smallest spark or heat source,” he remarked, highlighting the risks to both waste management workers and the equipment involved. Fortunately, in these instances, no injuries were reported and the immediate impacts on vehicles and property were minimal, although the disruption caused inconvenience to local residents.

In light of these events, the council has reiterated essential safety practices for disposal. They advise that disposable barbecues should be allowed to cool completely, ideally overnight. Residents are encouraged to soak them in water and then securely wrap them in foil before placing them in black wheelie bins. Additionally, loose batteries, especially lithium-ion types found in vapes, pose significant hazards. The National Fire Chiefs Council has documented a national increase of 71% in battery-related fires over the past year, attributing many occurrences to improper disposal methods. Over 1,200 such incidents were reported across the UK in the last year alone, underscoring the pressing need for awareness around the disposal of lithium-ion batteries that can explode or ignite when crushed.

Authorities across various councils including Stratford-on-Avon and Cambridge have echoed similar warnings. Both councils have highlighted the necessity of ensuring disposable barbecues are fully extinguished before disposal, and urged residents to recycle batteries appropriately to mitigate the risk of fires. Shared guidance from the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service stresses that batteries should never be placed in general waste due to their potential to ignite and cause fires that are difficult to suppress.

In summary, as Leeds City Council combats these recent fire hazards, residents are urged to adopt safer disposal practices. The emphasis on responsible waste management not only helps protect local communities but also contributes to broader environmental safety. As the community navigates these challenges, increased vigilance from residents in managing waste could prevent further incidents, ensuring both public safety and environmental responsibility remain a priority.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.leeds-live.co.uk/news/leeds-news/urgent-warning-bin-lorries-catch-31742082), [[4]](https://www.stratford.gov.uk/news/press.cfm/item/137997)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.leeds-live.co.uk/news/leeds-news/urgent-warning-bin-lorries-catch-31742082), [[2]](https://www.nfcc.org.uk/over-1200-battery-fires-in-bin-lorries-and-waste-sites-across-the-uk-in-last-year/), [[5]](https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/news/2024/05/30/incorrect-disposal-of-batteries-causes-fires)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/bins-and-recycling/your-bins/black-bin), [[6]](https://www.wakefield.gov.uk/your-district/we-urge-residents-to-never-bin-their-batteries-after-fire-in-bin-lorry/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.leeds-live.co.uk/news/leeds-news/urgent-warning-bin-lorries-catch-31742082> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.nfcc.org.uk/over-1200-battery-fires-in-bin-lorries-and-waste-sites-across-the-uk-in-last-year/> - In the past year, the UK has witnessed over 1,200 battery-related fires in bin lorries and waste sites, marking a 71% increase from 2022. This surge is attributed to the improper disposal of lithium-ion batteries found in devices like vapes and mobile phones. Such incidents pose significant risks, including air pollution spikes and potential explosions. The National Fire Chiefs Council emphasizes the importance of correct disposal methods to prevent these hazards.
3. <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/bins-and-recycling/your-bins/black-bin> - Leeds City Council provides guidelines on waste disposal, highlighting items that should not be placed in black bins. Prohibited items include batteries, gas bottles, motor vehicle parts, paint, rubble, soil, syringes, and unused medications. Residents are encouraged to recycle these items appropriately to ensure safety and environmental responsibility.
4. <https://www.stratford.gov.uk/news/press.cfm/item/137997> - Stratford-on-Avon District Council issued a warning after a disposable barbecue caused a fire in a recycling lorry. The incident occurred when a disposable barbecue was placed in a recycling bin, igniting and leading to a fire in the vehicle. The council advises residents to ensure disposable barbecues are fully cooled and soaked in water before disposal to prevent such hazards.
5. <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/news/2024/05/30/incorrect-disposal-of-batteries-causes-fires> - Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire residents are reminded to dispose of batteries safely after seven fires involving bin lorries this year. Lithium-ion batteries from devices like mobile phones and vapes, when placed in wheelie bins, can be crushed, leading to explosions and fires. The council urges residents to recycle batteries correctly to prevent such incidents.
6. <https://www.wakefield.gov.uk/your-district/we-urge-residents-to-never-bin-their-batteries-after-fire-in-bin-lorry/> - Wakefield Council highlighted the dangers of discarding batteries in household bins following a fire in a bin lorry in Kettlethorpe. The fire was caused by lithium-ion batteries from devices like vapes and e-scooters. The council advises residents to recycle batteries responsibly to prevent such incidents.
7. <https://www.westyorksfire.gov.uk/lithium-batteries> - West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service provides guidance on the safe use and storage of lithium-ion batteries. They emphasize the risks associated with these batteries, including potential fires that can spread rapidly and are challenging to extinguish. The service advises residents to avoid placing batteries in general waste bins and to recycle them appropriately to reduce fire risks.