
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anna Caballero, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

SB 501 (Allen) - Responsible Battery Recycling Act of 2022: covered batteries

Version: January 14, 2026

Policy Vote: E.Q. 6 - 0, JUD. 11 - 0, E.Q. 5 - 2

Urgency: No

Mandate: Yes

Hearing Date: January 20, 2026

Consultant: Ashley Ames

Bill Summary: This bill would add medium-format batteries, as defined, to the existing extended producer responsibility (EPR) program for batteries, the Responsible Battery Recycling Act of 2022.

Fiscal Impact:

- The Department of Resources Recovery and Recycling (CalRecycle) estimates implementation costs of \$285,000 in FY 2027-2028 for 2 positions, with increased ongoing annual costs beginning in FY 2028-2029 of \$512,000 for 3 positions (Covered Battery Recycling Fund) in order to conduct research on medium format batteries; support the inclusion of medium format batteries into the current EPR program; coordinate with DTSC and other relevant state agencies on compliance related issues; prosecute additional enforcement actions resulting from larger regulated community; and support the overall enforcement, planning, and strategy of the updated EPR program. CalRecycle expects that the January 14, 2026 amendments to this bill could increase these costs.
- Unknown but potentially significant cost pressure (Hazardous Waste Control Account [HWCA]) to the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). According to DTSC, this bill would significantly expand the number of regulated entities, resulting in increases to DTSC's enforcement activity. DTSC states that the Responsible Battery Recycling Act's current enforcement and reimbursement provision would not fund or reimburse the department for the oversight costs of this bill beyond plan review.

Background:

The state's Hazardous Waste Control Law prohibits the disposal of batteries in the trash or household recycling collection bins. Many types of batteries, regardless of size, exhibit hazardous characteristics and are considered hazardous waste when they are discarded. These include single use alkaline and lithium batteries and rechargeable lithium metal, nickel cadmium, and nickel metal hydride batteries of various sizes (AAA, AA, C, D, button cell, 9-Volt) and small sealed lead-acid batteries.

There are two key state laws that dictate how batteries should be managed at the end of their lives: AB 2440 (Irwin, Chapter 351, Statutes of 2022), which covers small loose batteries (e.g. not bicycle or larger batteries for some household appliances), and SB 1215 (Newman, Chapter 370, Statutes of 2022), which covers batteries embedded in products.

- a) *AB 2440.* AB 2440 created the Responsible Battery Recycling Act, an EPR program for producers of small format batteries. In broad strokes, the EPR program operates by requiring a PRO to develop a stewardship plan for the collection, transportation, recycling, and safe and proper management of covered products in the state. The stewardship plan must be approved by CalRecycle and DTSC; CalRecycle is currently developing the regulations for this program in consultation with DTSC. The program is funded through reimbursement provided by producers and stewardship organization or organizations. That fund is used to cover the costs that CalRecycle and DTSC take on to implement and enforce the program.
- b) *SB 1215.* Many batteries are sold within products, such as lithium-ion batteries, which are widely used in portable electronics like laptops, smart phones, digital cameras, game consoles, and cordless power tools. These products are considered "covered battery-embedded products" under SB 1215, if the battery is not designed to be removed from the product by the consumer.

SB 1215 added covered battery-embedded products to the electronic waste recycle act (EWRA) and requires CalRecycle to establish a fee, paid by consumers on new or refurbished covered battery-embedded products, that covers the reasonable regulatory costs to properly manage and recycle the covered battery-embedded products and to administer the EWRA.

The existing laws to manage batteries are for small batteries (AB 2440) and for batteries embedded in products (SB 1215). This leaves a significant loophole in California's current programs: medium-format batteries, such as those found on ebikes, appliances or outdoor power equipment, which are still likely to be removed and/or replaced by the consumer are not covered under either program. Creating a pathway for responsible end of life management for these mid-sized batteries is especially important as sales of ebikes and other battery-powered appliances are on the rise.

Proposed Law: This bill would:

1. Add to the definition of 'loose' battery that is covered in the Responsible Battery Recycling Act of 2022 to specify that it includes batteries that can be easily removed using common household tools.
2. Expand the scope of the Responsible Battery Recycling Act to include batteries up to 25lbs, striking existing language that excludes batteries weighing over two kilograms and rechargeable batteries over five kilograms and having more than 300 Watt-hours.
3. Specify that medium format batteries need only have 5 collection sites per county or one collection site per 30,000 people.

Related Legislation:

AB 2240 (Irwin, Chapter 351, Statutes of 2022) enacted the Responsible Battery Recycling Act of 2022, which requires producers of covered household batteries to establish a stewardship program for the collection and recycling of covered batteries.

SB 1215 (Newman, Chapter 370, Statutes of 2022) adds covered battery-embedded products to the EWRA and requires CalRecycle to establish a fee, paid by consumers on new or refurbished covered battery-embedded products, that covers the reasonable regulatory costs to properly manage and recycle the covered battery-embedded products and to administer the EWRA

SB 615 (Allen, 2025) requires producers of electric vehicle (EV) batteries to ensure the safe end of life management of those batteries. SB 615 is scheduled to be heard today in the Senate Environmental Quality Committee.

SB 1143 Allen (Chapter 989, Statutes of 2024) makes changes to the state's paint product stewardship program to expand the number of products covered in the program by January 1, 2028, at the latest and to require manufacturers of paint products to review their stewardship plan and submit any amendments to CalRecycle for review on a five-year basis.

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