

# IMPORTANT NOTICE REGARDING Battery and Charging Safety



You may have read recently about several incidents involving fires caused by lithium-ion batteries in portable electronic devices.

Portable electronic devices which have been particularly prone to fire risk include e-scooters, e-bikes, e-mobility scooters and self-balancing scooters (hoverboards). However, lithium-ion batteries are used in any number of smaller devices and we should be aware of battery charging and safety for all devices which use this technology.

In multi-story buildings the effect of a fire or explosion would be devastating.

The Strata Committee recently invited representatives from NSW Fire + Rescue to address the last Committee meeting to update us on the risks and precautionary measures which we can all take to avoid a potential disaster.

In summary the matters which were brought to our attention are as follows.

## When charging batteries and devices

1. Charge only on hard surfaces away from combustible material
2. Plug directly into a power point; do not use a powerboard or extension cord.
3. Be home
4. Be awake
5. Disconnect the charger or battery as soon as it has charged
6. Check batteries regularly for signs of deterioration.

Here are the main things you can do to prevent an incident involving lithium-ion batteries.

## Prepare your space

- Do not charge batteries or devices on combustible surfaces such as beds, or carpet and keep them away from flammable materials such as curtains, clothing and paper.
- Larger batteries and equipment, including electric scooters should not be charged in living spaces.

## When to charge

- Avoid leaving batteries or devices unattended while being charged or overnight.
- Once the indicator shows the device or battery is charged, disconnect it from the charger.

## Safe Charging

- **Only use chargers that are supplied with the equipment, or certified third-party charging equipment. Using chargers with incorrect power delivery can cause damage to the battery leading to over-heating and fires.**
- Only purchase and use devices and equipment from reputable manufacturers and suppliers.
- Check that the chargers bear the Regulatory Compliance Mark, to show that they meet the relevant Australian Standards.
- Never use and charge devices such as phones, tablets and e-cigarettes or vaping devices at the same time in bed, They can overheat if you fall asleep.
- Never store or leave light electric vehicle batteries or devices where they can be exposed to heat or moisture.
- Do not use batteries or devices that show signs of swelling, leaking, over heating or which are cracked, dented, punctured or crushed.
- Do not use an extension cord or powerboard when charging; there is a risk of overloading
- Every apartment should have a fire blanket stored in a handy location.

## ELECTRIC VEHICLES (EV's)

Electric vehicles (EVs) are becoming more prevalent as consumers select greener transport options. EVs commonly contain lithium-ion batteries and come with associated risks and hazards (including fire and explosion, radiation, heat, chemical and electrical).

Fire and Rescue NSW is currently conducting research on how best to mitigate incidents involving these technologies and how best to respond to incidents when they occur. While we work on the research, there are some measures that we urge users to be aware of to minimise their exposure to hazards.

- Make sure that your EV is identifiable by emergency services. There should be a blue "EV" sticker/badge on the number plate to indicate that it is an electric or hybrid vehicle. These stickers are there specifically to warn emergency responders of the presence of a high voltage battery. Information on the requirements is available from the NSW Government website [external link].
- When installing charging equipment, ensure the charging cable and/or unit is electrically compliant and installed by a qualified electrician to AS/NZS 3000 *Electrical Installations "Wiring Rules", Appendix P Guidance for Installation and Location of Electrical Vehicle Socket-Outlets and Charging Stations*.
- FRNSW recommends that a smoke alarm or a heat alarm is installed in garages where an EV is regularly parked or charged. We recommend having a licenced electrician install and interconnect mains-powered devices where possible. Check with the manufacturer or distributor to ensure device models are compatible for interconnection.

- When charging your EV, only use extension leads and power sockets that are intended for use in the charging of electric vehicles. Always exercise caution when charging in wet weather, and especially during electrical storms.

### **If any incident occurs involving an EV**

- Act quickly and make sure the parking brake is engaged and the vehicle is switched off before evacuating the vehicle of all passengers.
- Keep clear of the vehicle and warn passers-by to keep at a safe distance (at least 30 metres), even if there is no visible smoke, vapours or flames.
- Call Triple Zero (000) and inform the operator that the vehicle involved is an EV. Clearly detail the make and model of the vehicle, which will allow responders to access additional emergency information specific to the vehicle.
- Ensure that remote keys cannot inadvertently start the vehicle.

**If anyone has been exposed to spilled electrolyte, flying debris, smoke or vapours, or flames, seek urgent medical assistance. Burns should be immediately treated with cool running water for 20 minutes. Burns larger than a 20-cent piece require emergency care. Treat with cool running water immediately, call Triple Zero (000), and follow the advice of the operator.**

Further information on electric vehicle fires can be found at [www.evfiresafe.com](http://www.evfiresafe.com) [external link]

### Damaged electric vehicles (EVs)

An electric vehicle that has been involved in a collision, a fire, or has been submerged, must be treated with caution as the high voltage battery pack may be compromised. Damaged EV batteries may ignite hours, days, or even weeks after the initial incident.

Contact the sales point, service point or vehicle manufacturer for advice.

Do not charge or use the vehicle unless it has been inspected and cleared by a qualified technician.

Damaged EVs should be kept in an open area at least 15 metres from other vehicles, buildings, and/or other exposures.

*Let's all work together to keep our building and its residents safe!*

Kind Regards,  
**Your Strata Committee**