

Safe Disposal of E-Cigarettes

The safe disposal of e-cigarettes is a growing concern for schools and communities. Because they have **lithium batteries**, which can catch on fire, they cannot be thrown in the trash. These batteries often get damaged by trash compactors and can cause fires during transportation to waste facilities. In addition, the nicotine found in vapes is **toxic** and poses a risk to both the environment and the waste collectors handling trash.

While it is not recommended, a person can dispose of these devices legally in their household trash because homeowners have an exception. However, a school or organization is considered an “entity” and must treat the waste as hazardous waste.

You will need to do a little homework before you start collecting, storing, managing, and disposing of devices. Each municipality works with a different hazardous waste vendor, with their own requirements. You will want to know ahead of time their specification, so you can show up prepared. They all schedule Household Hazardous Waste Days to safely collect hazardous waste. For information on your town’s next collection day, call your town office, the Hazardous Waste Helpline at (603) 271- 2942, or email hhw@des.nh.gov. Also, check out the factsheets and resources on handling this waste at [New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services - Waste designed especially for schools](#).

Follow their instructions below for collecting, storing, and disposing of these devices.

Before you start collecting:

You will need to call your local waste management vendor to:

- (1) Tell them you are collecting these devices at a school to get an EPA Identification Number.
- (2) Inform them you will bring them to the Household Hazardous Waste Day so they are prepared to receive it.
- (3) Learn their requirements to properly collect, label, manage, and store these devices.
- (4) Mark your calendar for your local Household Hazardous Waste Day.

Instructions for Schools and Communities:

Vapes should not be thrown out in your regular trash and recycling. They should be taken to a hazardous waste collection site to guarantee a safe disposal. These sites are typically free and can be found online when searching for hazardous waste collection sites or contacting the local solid waste agency. For NH, visit the [NH Department of Environmental Services’ Household Hazardous Waste](#) webpage.

The NH Department of Environment Services recommends the following steps:

- Make sure your school has a valid EPA Identification Number and is notified as a hazardous waste generator, unless your school resource officer is managing this waste through the local police department.
- Upon collection, immediately bag each vaping device individually in a plastic bag.
- Place all of the individually bagged vaping devices into a sealed five-gallon plastic (polyethylene) pail or bin.
- Label the pail or bin “Vaping Devices-Hazardous Waste”.
- Check vaping devices for swelling, leaking, and damage prior to storing.
- Place any swollen or damaged vaping devices in a separate closed, watertight, storage container such as a plastic (polyethylene) pail or bin. Add sand, kitty litter, vermiculite or another fire containment material to aid in safe storage.
- When handling damaged vaping devices, always wear safety equipment (e.g., gloves, apron and eye protection).
- Liquid nicotine is very toxic and should not come in contact with skin or face. Damaged batteries could cause burn or other injury.
- Avoid stockpiling vaping devices. Remove for proper recycling/disposal with a New Hampshire Hazardous Waste Transporter.
- Store the collection pail in a locked storage area where it cannot be accidentally knocked over or easily accessed.
- Keep a fire extinguisher in the storage area.

References:

- [EPA - How to Safely Dispose of E-Cigarettes](#)
- [Boulder - Electronic Smoking Device Disposal Guide](#)
- [Public Health Law Center - Disposing of E-Cigarette Waste](#)

Additional Resources:

- [TUPE - Key Issues](#): Information about flavored tobacco bans, vaping 101, nicotine addiction, the triangulum, and safe disposal of vape waste.
- [NH Department of Environmental Services - Management of Vaping Liquids and E-Cigarettes in Schools](#): One-pager about best management practices for safe disposal of vapes in schools.
- [Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation - Vaping Device and Safe Management at Schools](#): Two-pager about best management practices for safe disposal of vapes in schools and additional resources.

