

Recycling Your Batteries

More than three billion batteries are sold each year in the U.S., many of which end up in the trash. The most common batteries (dry cell batteries—the ones that fill our flashlights, remotes and electronic toys) are way better than they used to be in that they are not considered highly toxic. (Batteries older than 1997, however, may contain ten times more mercury than the newer versions. Yikes!)

Most battery recycling programs accept rechargeable batteries, especially Nickel-Cadmium (Ni-Cad) batteries and car batteries. It is important to recycle these because they are considered hazardous waste. Fortunately, many places like Radio Shack, Staples and Best Buy will take rechargeables and Advance Auto Parts, Wal-Marts, Worly Recycling and the Delaware County Transfer Station will take car batteries (usually when you get a new battery, the dealer will recycle your old one).

But I always wondered why throwing out the regular AA, AAA, C, D and other single-use batteries was okay...they still contain trace amounts of toxins which can't be good for the earth—and, they fill up our landfills. Can't they be recycled? Well, many municipalities across the country just find it isn't worth the money. But, hold the phone. Thanks to my friend and fellow St. Mary Green Team member Jerry G., we've discovered Batteries Plus in Lewis Center (and other stores in the chain around the country). You can take your single-use batteries there for recycling—as well as your rechargeables.

According to Earth911.com, batteries disposed of in municipal landfills and trash incinerators can disperse significant amounts of heavy metals and other toxic substances into the air and water. So, battery waste prevention and recycling strategies are essential. The Environmental Health & Safety online site reports that dry cell batteries contribute about 88 percent of the total mercury and 50 percent of the cadmium in the municipal solid waste stream.

Another option is the mail-order recycling program offered through Battery Solutions. You can send away for their iRecycle kits and recycle your dry cells and other smaller batteries at a cost of 85 cents per pound (learn more at www.batteryrecycling.com).

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