



Refuse Collection: Preventing Truck Fires

According to the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA), an estimated 212,500 vehicle fires caused \$1.9 billion in direct property damage in the U.S. during 2018. The leading causes of vehicle fires were mechanical failures or malfunctions. In the waste industry, vehicle fires can be caused by the improper disposal of trash, typically flammable materials such as paint, pool chemicals, and even gasoline. How can your organization prevent injuries or the loss of a \$300,000 vehicle?



Preventive Maintenance

- Ensure that battery disconnect switches are routinely inspected and operational.
- Conduct pre-inspections - checking batteries, cables, and wires.
- Look for signs of excessive grease, oil, or an accumulation of hydraulic fluid.
- Keep the area behind the compactor blade clean and free of debris.



Recognize Hot Loads

A truckload of recyclables or trash can catch fire, smolder, spontaneously combust, or become toxic as a result of incompatible waste mixing inside the collection truck.

- Avoid leaving waste trucks and transfer trailers loaded overnight.
- Train employees on hot load procedures.
- Pre-identify safe areas you can drop a hot load.
- Coordinate with the fire department to be on site prior to dropping the hot load.
- When dropping a hot load, be mindful of high winds and wildfire exposures.
- Train with your local fire department and develop a procedure that works for your community.



Promote Safe Disposal

Educating the public on how to properly dispose of household hazardous waste can help reduce the risk of hot loads and vehicle fires. Encourage your community to take advantage of household hazardous waste drops by sharing locations and event dates through social media and on your website.

Resources

- [Household Hazardous Waste \(HHW\)](#)
- [Lithium Batteries in the Solid Waste System](#)
- Safety: [The Burning Issue: Keeping you Operations and Trucks Safe from Fire](#)
- Close Calls: [Not a Waste-The Tale of a CNG_Garbage Truck Fire - Close Calls: Not a Waste— The Tale of a CNG Garbage Truck Fire | Firehouse](#)