

Mitigating the Risk Series: Reducing the fire hazards of lithium ion batteries

Standard loss control techniques for reducing fire hazards start with **removing any hazard completely**, in this case the batteries. However, the utility and ubiquitous nature of these components can make this unreasonable. The checklist below will help to reduce the hazard these units pose.

Look for the testing authority label

Make sure the units on site have passed the requirements of a recognized testing authority. Underwriters Labs (UL) and others have a robust labeling protocol to identify components that have passed their rigorous design and testing parameters.

Do not overcharge or over-deplete

The battery packs should only be charged using the appropriate charging device. Batteries should also not be used in equipment they are not designed for, to prevent over-depletion.

Do not use damaged units

Regularly inspect, and remove from service, all components that have been physically damaged, or exhibit symptoms of failure such as swelling or significant loss of capacity.

Watch for overheating

Do not allow vents and other heat dissipation structures to be blocked. Keep an eye on the units when charging, and do not allow the units to be charged unattended. Sometimes an overheating pack may produce an odor, so keeping alert for unusual smells is important.

Do not make unauthorized repairs or use

Do not attempt to repair or modify a battery pack. Damaged packs should only be repaired by an authorized, experienced service provider. Tinkering or hacking may bypass the built-in safeguards and lead to premature failure.

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