

-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-

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QUICK RESPONSE AVERTS DAMAGE

Expensive damage to a Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council (CGRC) garbage compactor trailer was prevented by the immediate reactions from CGRC staff and local fire brigades when a discarded battery sparked a fire in the compactor trailer.

A Cootamundra Waste Facility staff member noticed smoke coming from the trailer and immediately closed the compactor hydraulic ram to prevent air from further fuelling the fire. The trailer was detached from the compactor machine when local fire brigades arrived, who were also assisted by neighbouring businesses with water supply and equipment.

Initial investigations revealed a discarded household battery ignited the household waste located in the compactor. Indiscriminate disposal of batteries in domestic garbage can often be crushed or punctured during the compacting stage, this can trigger thermal runaway – a chain reaction that leads to fire or explosion.

Residents are reminded to dispose of batteries at dedicated battery recycling bins located at supermarkets, Council administration offices and Community Recycling Centres in Cootamundra and Gundagai.

The incidents of fires in waste materials are on the increase. Other common ignition sources include:

- Batteries, especially lithium-ion (from vapes, phones, laptops, power tools)
- Electronics, cables and chargers
- Aerosol cans, particularly if not fully empty
- Gas bottles like BBQ or camping canisters
- Containers that held flammable liquids, such as paint thinners or solvents

When these items are put in general waste or recycling, they can cause sparks, heat, or pressure build-up that leads to fire.

CGRC Mayor Abb McAlister said the quick response to this latest fire diverted a huge cost to ratepayers.

“I commend the staff and the responders on their quick response, not only have they saved a very expensive piece of machinery, more importantly they averted a potential safety risk to themselves and customers at the facility.

I strongly encourage all ratepayers and residents to dispose of flammable materials with utmost care. The safety of our staff is our highest priority, and improper disposal not only endangers their wellbeing but also poses a serious threat to public infrastructure,” Cr McAlister said.

Picture and caption

A fire in a garbage compactor this week, was sparked by a discarded battery.



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