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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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The Honorable Paul Roberti
Administrator
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Administrator Roberti,

The growth in production and usage of lithium-ion batteries presents heightened risks and unique safety challenges across our supply chain, notably by causing fires that release hazardous materials that place our law enforcement and first responders at risk. Numerous recent incidents confirm that this is an immediate safety threat, and I believe updates to our federal hazardous materials regulations are necessary. I introduced the Battery Safety Placarding Act and encourage your agency to pursue similar regulatory fixes for the safety of law enforcement, first responders, and the American public.

The lithium-ion battery market exceeded \$150 billion in 2025, an increase of over 20% from 2024.¹ With demand on the rise in the U.S. and across the globe, nearly every mode of transportation moves these products to their destinations. This growing volume coincides with recent dangerous incidents involving lithium-ion batteries in transit, especially uncontrolled fires. Fires caused by lithium-ion batteries are often more dangerous due to thermal runaway, a violent chain of chemical reactions resulting in excessive temperatures, toxic gas release, and, in some cases, explosions. When transporting lithium-ion batteries long distances, these fires and the risk of thermal runaway can pose serious safety hazards to operators responsible for the shipment, surrounding bystanders, and most significantly, law enforcement and first responders at the scene of an accident.

For example, in August, an 82,500-pound Tesla Megapack containing numerous lithium-ion batteries fell off a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) along I-40 in Arkansas, resulting in a fire that burned for hours.² In June, a railcar carrying lithium-ion batteries caught fire in the Cajon Pass in Southern California.³ In May, a CMV carrying 32,000 pounds of lithium-ion batteries caught fire on I-70 in Indiana, shutting down the highway in both directions as law enforcement and first responders spent hours trying to extinguish the flames.⁴

¹ <https://www.iea.org/commentaries/global-battery-markets-are-growing-strongly-and-so-are-the-supply-risks>

² <https://www.yahoo.com/news/us/articles/tesla-megapack-falls-off-truck-113113683.html>

³ <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2026-06-04/rail-car-loaded-with-lithium-batteries-bursts-into-flames-in-cajon-pass>

⁴ <https://www.yahoo.com/news/us/articles/semi-carrying-32-000-pounds-113447913.html>

Given the frequency of these incidents, ensuring there is a rapid, effective, and safe response whenever they occur is essential to minimizing further risk and protecting the American public. As it currently stands, lithium-ion batteries fall under the Class 9 Miscellaneous Hazardous Materials designation, which, according to federal regulations, generally does not require a hazardous material placard to be outwardly displayed on modes of transport or freight containers. This poses risks to law enforcement and first responders at the scene of an accident, as they might not be immediately aware that lithium-ion batteries are present or that a thermal runaway is possible.

Accordingly, one key first step should be to give law enforcement and first responders every available tool to quickly identify shipments containing lithium-ion batteries to not only provide for their safety, but to improve the speed, efficacy, and decision-making of real-time responses to incidents that occur. To accomplish this objective, I introduced the Battery Safety Placarding Act, directing PHMSA to require an external placard to be displayed on shipments containing designated quantities of lithium-ion batteries. By supporting early identification, we can minimize adverse consequences and bolster public safety. I encourage you to take similar action within PHMSA's existing authority.

Sincerely,



Harriet M. Hageman
Member of Congress