

Safe Storage of Batteries

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SAFE STORAGE OF BATTERIES ////////////////////////////////////

With the increasing dependence on battery-powered devices, batteries have become vital in the Navy and Marine Corps. However, using batteries also poses specific hazards that can lead to severe accidents if safety protocols are not followed. To avoid such risks, it is essential to adhere to established instructions, cautions and warnings related to the use and storage of batteries.

Improper storage of batteries is one of the most common discrepancies that Naval Safety Command (NAVSAFECOM) assessors encounter during Local Area Assessments (LAA). These discrepancies include not only the storage of loose batteries but also the storage of devices that contain batteries. Examples include storing lithium batteries with other types of batteries or storing new batteries with ones awaiting disposal. To ensure safety, it is crucial to follow established battery storage safety guidelines at all times, including safe handling, charging and disposal practices.

In fiscal 2023, NAVSAFECOM assessors detected 47 discrepancies in 17 separate squadron battery programs. Of these, 57% of the discrepancies were due to improper storage. As of August 2024, Naval Safety Command is monitoring 43 discrepancies in 24 different squadron battery programs, with 90% of discrepancies being storage-related issues.

One significant factor leading to improper battery storage is a lack of training. A commonly observed discrepancy in battery storage is the practice of storing alkaline batteries with lithium batteries. However, some battery program managers have stated they don't track alkaline batteries, citing a lack of clear guidance in the NA-17-15BAD-1 or the S9310-AQ-SAF-010 manuals. While this perception may seem valid, both manuals provide explicit instructions on the types of batteries that can and cannot be stored together. Therefore, battery program managers and anyone who handles batteries need to understand and follow these guidelines set forth to ensure safe and effective battery storage.



Above and right, examples of battery storage.
(U.S. Navy photo by Senior Chief Aviation Electrician's Mate William Davis)



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NAVSAFECOM assessments have also revealed that lithium batteries are often not stored appropriately while waiting for disposal. Assessors have observed that lithium batteries were being stored with new and partially used batteries, leading to several discrepancies in battery management. Additionally, the battery program manager needed to track the date of any batteries waiting for disposal.

To address this issue, the S9310-AQ-SAF-010 Appendix F provides guidelines for managing used or excess batteries. Paragraph F-3.6.3 outlines the requirements for documenting the time batteries have been accumulating. A commonly held best practice of commands is to label each battery individually per the publications. However, there are other methods program managers can use to track the date of the oldest battery. For instance, labeling the container holding the batteries with the date or creating an inventory system that tracks the date are some alternative methods that the publication allows. Any method that demonstrates the time the batteries have accumulated is permissible.

The increasing reliance on battery-powered devices in the Navy and Marine Corps has made it vital to follow established guidelines for safe and effective battery use, storage and disposal. Improper battery storage is a common issue that can lead to severe accidents if not addressed. Therefore, it is essential for battery program managers and anyone who handles batteries to understand and follow the guidelines provided in the relevant manuals. Proper battery storage and safe handling, charging and disposal practices ensure the safety of everyone involved.



Cover: U.S. Navy Aviation Support Equipment Technician 3rd Class Zach Haegele swaps batteries on a P-25 firefighting truck during a maintenance inspection aboard the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68). (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Kevin Tang)