

Hot Loads

Catch the fire before it starts.

One lithium-ion battery, one bucket of pool chemicals, one shovel of hot ashes — any of them can turn a routine load into a truck fire in minutes. Prevention plus a fast, practiced response is what protects our employees, our customers, the public, and our property.

Three things you will not see coming

These are the most common ignition sources in our loads — and they are nearly impossible for a driver or facility operator to spot during collection or disposal.



Lithium-ion batteries

Hidden in vapes, tools, toys, and devices. They ignite when crushed.



Pool chemicals

Oxidizers react with organics and moisture in the body of the truck.



Hot ashes

Look cold, stay live for days, and reignite once they hit fresh fuel.

Prevent it on your shift

- ☐ Check for incompatible materials whenever you can. **Never accept or load lithium-ion batteries, pool chemicals, or hot ashes** into trucks or at post-collection facilities.
- ☐ Inspect fire extinguishers on **every pre-trip and post-trip**. Vehicles and heavy equipment need a minimum **20 lb ABC extinguisher**, inspected annually and fully charged.
- ☐ Keep trucks free and clean of debris when they are off-route.
- ☐ Keep transfer stations clean, and maintain adequate cover at landfills when closed or not operating.
- ☐ **BEST PRACTICE** Run 24-hour thermal fire detection and monitoring at working faces and tipping floors.

Respond — the first 30 seconds

Seconds decide the outcome. Know your column before you need it.

In the truck

Smoke or fire in the body or container

- 1 Watch for smoke or flames.
- 2 Pack the load to slow the fire if it is in the body.
- 3 Pull off the road safely — minimal traffic and people, clear of buildings, combustible structures, and power lines.
- 4 Use a fire extinguisher (P.A.S.S.) if the fire is in the hopper.
- 5 Eject the hot load to avoid damaging the truck.
- 6 Back away and manage the scene.
- 7 **Call 911**
- 8 Notify your supervisor or collection manager.

At the facility

Smoke or fire at a post-collection site

- 1 Watch for smoke or flames.
- 2 Use heavy equipment as a fire break to separate burning material. Push material outside at a transfer station or MRF.
- 3 Use on-site water trucks as available.
- 4 Start covering with earthen material at a post-collection facility.
- 5 Notify your supervisor or post-collection manager for support.
- 6 **Call 911**

Never bury a fire.

If a load lit up right now, would you know exactly what to do in the first 30 seconds?

Content provided by
Scott Tarkington
Regional EHS, GFL Environmental