

Press Release

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****FIRE SAFETY ALERT** CFO & State Fire Marshal Jimmy Patronis: Lithium-ion Batteries are Ticking Time Bombs in Wake of Hurricane Helene**

10/1/2024

For Immediate Release: Monday, October 1, 2024

Contact: Office of Communications,

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****FIRE SAFETY ALERT** CFO & State Fire Marchal Jimmy Patronis:
Lithium-ion Batteries are Ticking Time Bombs in Wake of Hurricane
Helene**

To: Interested Stakeholders

From: Florida Department of Financial Services

Date: October 1, 2024

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Today, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) & State Fire Marshal Jimmy Patronis issued a warning to residents and first responders about an alarming fire hazard with Lithium-ion batteries, Electric Vehicles (EV), as well as hybrid and fuel cell vehicles developing in the wake of Hurricane Helene. The CFO's Division of State Fire Marshal has confirmed

16 lithium-ion battery fires related to storm surge from Helene, with six of those fires associated with EVs. State fire officials believe these statistics to be conservative figures and are working with fire departments statewide to gather more data and determine any structural impacts related to EVs and lithium-battery fires following this storm. The State Fire Marshal Office is also coordinating with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the U.S. Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for guidance on proper lithium-ion battery disposal.

CFO & State Fire Marshal Jimmy Patronis said, "Following the devastating impacts from Hurricane Helene last week, the Division of State Fire Marshal has confirmed more than a dozen reports of EVs, hybrids or other lithium-ion battery powered vehicles or devices causing fire hazards in areas impacted by this storm. Saltwater storm surge makes EVs a dangerous fire threat and if you have one of these vehicles including cars, scooters, hover boards, golf carts or children's toys that has been compromised by flooding, please unplug the vehicle or device and move it safely away from your home or apartment into a clear open space. If a vehicle needs to be towed, contact a reputable tow company in your area to safely remove it from your property. EVs and lithium-battery powered devices cannot be disposed of in a typical car lot or trash bin, so you will also want to contact your local government on the best locations for safe disposal.

"Unfortunately, prior to Hurricane Helene making landfall, we did not see a lot of proactive measures by manufacturers in notifying customers in storm surge areas to relocate their vehicles. It's not too late for these manufacturers to send out notifications and fire safety information directly to their consumers and I'm encouraging these companies to provide solutions immediately to help protect Floridians. These compromised vehicles and devices are ticking time bombs and my office will continue to coordinate with federal, state, and local officials to ensure consumers and first responders are aware of these fire hazards following Hurricane Helene."

Follow these fire safety tips if your EV, hybrid, or alternative fuel vehicle was flooded during Hurricane Helene:

- Leave all windows and/or doors open to allow any potentially flammable gases to vent from the passenger compartment.

- If the vehicle is being stored indoors, and can be moved, move it outside into an open-air location. If it cannot be moved, try to keep the storage area open and vented.
- Unplug and do not attempt to charge the vehicle.
- Disable the vehicle by chocking the wheels, placing the gearshift in park and removing the ignition key and/or disconnecting the 12V battery.
- Avoid contact with the HV battery especially if a vehicle is showing signs of a damaged or overheating HV battery.
- Follow manufacturers recommendations for your specific vehicle.

Additional Resources and Fire Safety Guidance:

- Lithium-Ion Battery Safety Guide - National Fire Protection Association
- Electric Vehicle Owner/General Public Safety Guide - U.S. Department of Transportation - Interim Guidance for Electric and Hybrid-Electric Vehicles Equipped With High-Voltage Batteries
- Towing & Recovery Operators and Vehicle Storage Facilities Safety Guide - U.S. Department of Transportation - Interim Guidance for Electric and Hybrid-Electric Vehicles Equipped With High-Voltage Batteries.

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About CFO Jimmy Patronis

Chief Financial Officer and State Fire Marshal Jimmy Patronis is a statewide elected official and a member of Florida’s Cabinet who oversees the Department of Financial Services. CFO Patronis works each day to fight insurance fraud, support Florida’s firefighters, and ensure the state’s finances are stable to support economic growth in the state. Follow the activities of the Department on Facebook ([FLDFS](#)) and on X ([@FLDFS](#)).

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