

E-bike battery fire in Holyoke injures one, forces evacuations

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A lithium-ion battery from an electric bicycle exploded in a Holyoke apartment March 9 causing serious injuries to a resident. The battery's remnants and debris are pictured here.

HOLYOKE — One person was seriously injured, and several residents were displaced, after an electric bicycle's battery pack exploded this weekend, according to Holyoke Fire Chief John Kadlewicz and State Fire Marshal Jon Davine.

The Holyoke Fire Department got a call about the fire at 16 West Court St. around 4:30 a.m. on Sunday. When crews arrived, they saw heavy smoke coming from the middle of the two-story apartment building.

While everyone managed to escape, one person was hurt and taken first to Baystate Medical Center and then to Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston for treatment.

Investigators found the fire started with the lithium-ion battery pack in the e-bike. The owner was trying to carry it outside when it exploded, the state Department of Fire Services said in a statement.

This incident is one of more than 170 fires linked to lithium-ion batteries since late 2023, when the department launched a new reporting system for these events, Davine said.

Lithium-ion batteries that power e-bikes and other devices have caused serious fires when abused,

“Please store, charge and dispose of them safely. And if you’ve got a larger device like a bike or scooter, it’s especially important to store it outside if possible. If you must store it indoors, keep it away from doors, windows and stairways. These are your way out in an emergency and the way in for firefighters coming to help,” he said.

Kadlewicz and Davine recommend picking devices that have been tested, storing and charging batteries safely, and recycling them the right way.

Always follow the manufacturer’s instructions, use the correct accessories and don’t leave charging devices unattended. If a battery looks damaged or shows unusual signs, stop using it, and call 9-1-1, they said.