



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 4, 2024

Recently, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and State Fire Marshal Jimmy Patronis issued a consumer alert to warn Floridians about the dangers of electric vehicle fires caused by submersion in saltwater, which are associated with impacts from Hurricane Helene.

The Florida Office of Insurance Regulation (OIR) is providing the consumer alert for insurers to share with policyholders. The consumer alert, which includes safety tips from the State Fire Marshal's Office, is below and also available [here](#).

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

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. - 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.

About the OIR

The Florida Office of Insurance Regulation (OIR) has primary responsibility for regulation, compliance, and enforcement of statutes related to the business of insurance and the monitoring of industry markets. For more information about OIR, please visit our [website](#) or follow us on Twitter [@FLOIR_comm](#).