

Are you disposing of your vape and cartridges correctly?

Vaping is growing in popularity and is seen as a trendy alternative to cigarettes amongst younger users. However, many are unaware that vapes are actually electronic waste, cautions Patricia Schröder, vice president at the Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa (IWMSA).



Image source: Mr Flame from [Pexels](#)

Toxin leaks due to incorrect disposal can be hazardous

A "vape," or electronic cigarette, is a device that heats up a liquid to create a vapor that the user then inhales. Since they have a heating element and lithium-ion batteries, vapes are considered as e-waste. But vape waste disposal is a big undertaking, because of the many chemicals and materials that are used in them.

"Despite the challenges, the correct vape disposal is absolutely crucial. After all, it keeps toxic substances and dangerous liquids out of general landfills," explains Schröder. "Even in the form of residues, these toxins can leak into natural habitats and river systems, where they can eventually contaminate our fresh water sources."



Call to comment on proposed amendment of regulations for waste sector

9 May 2023



She says these dangerous elements can, however, be kept out of the environment by recycling and good product management. "Additionally, the materials, including the harmful components, can be recovered for use in other applications."

Informed users are responsible users

Schröder notes that all electronic waste was banned from landfills in August 2021.

“And due to the fact that vape cartridges contain both electronic components and packaging, they are included in this legislation. However, there is definitely still a need for greater acceptance and understanding on the part of both manufacturers and consumers.”

She says vapers should ensure their disposable cartridges are collected through a “mandatory take back-programme” and then delivered to a recycling facility for environmentally sound management of the waste and to recover resources.

“Return the used vape cartridges to the merchants who sold them, and preferably, only support vendors that will properly manage the vape cartridges and have proof of this,” she elaborates.



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“Under no circumstance dispose of your vape cartridges in normal waste bins as these go to general landfill and will cause pollution of this environment.”

According to Schröder, so-called “end-of-life care” and recycling of vape goods are specialised tasks that call for very specific technology, expertise, and management approaches.

“It is the only way we can ensure environmentally sound management that does not adversely affect the environment or the handlers of the waste products.”

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