



COMMITTEE *ON* HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Examining Fire Hazards: Lithium-Ion Batteries and Other Threats to Fire Safety

February 15, 2024

I want to start by thanking our witnesses for appearing before the Subcommittee today. I also want to extend my gratitude to all firefighters and fire safety personnel for the work you do to manage fire response and keep communities safe across the U.S.

Earlier this month, New York Governor Kathy Hochul announced a statewide campaign banning the sale of uncertified lithium-ion batteries. These uncertified batteries have resulted in fires with numerous deaths in New York City and across the nation.

These batteries pose a relatively new hazard, and the development of standards is an important step towards solving this important safety issue. However, we must keep in mind that micromobility devices such as e-bikes, e-scooters are credited with reducing traffic congestion, alleviating parking issues, and providing affordable transportation options especially in urban areas.

I applaud Rep. Ritchie Torres's leadership on this important issue. His bill, H.R. 1797, the Setting Consumer Standards for Lithium-Ion Batteries Act, was reported out of the Committee on Energy and Commerce with a 42 – 0 vote in December.

In New York last year alone, at least 18 people lost their lives from fires ignited by lithium-ion batteries. This issue extends outside of New York as well; cities across the country are grappling with fires caused by uncertified lithium-ion batteries. Setting consumer standards through H.R. 1797 is a clear step in preventing further fatalities. More remains to be done on this issue and to address the myriad of other fire safety threats, including wildfires, as well.

Extreme wildfires across the U.S., such as the tragic fires in Hawaii, have caused devastation in many communities. Early 2024 is predicted to bring above-normal wildfire risk to the northern Midwest and the western coast of Alaska. This threat continues not only in the near-term but will persist in the decades to come.

Unfortunately, many of my Republican colleagues continue to disregard the climate change risks confronting our country. Their lack of belief in climate change comes at a time when action is critical to mitigating climate risk. Sadly, the lack of will to address climate change comes at the expense of frontline workers, such as firefighters, who battle fires flamed by the effects of climate change every day.

In my home state of Mississippi, a combination of severe drought and other conditions resulted in an early and relentless 2023 wildfire season. In just four months, over 1,000 wildfires consumed 16,000 acres. I thank the Mississippi Forest Commission's wildland firefighters for battling these fires and saving nearly 2,000 structures.

I am also grateful for all the other wildland firefighters in the U.S. who have risked their lives to keep people safe from these devastating fires. With that, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on how to mitigate threats from fire hazards.

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