

Mercury Thermostat Recycling

Graphic Open:

DTSC Instructional Video: Recycling Mercury Thermostats

VO:

Recycling mercury thermostats - it isn't a choice, it's the law.

NAT SOT:

I've got a thermostat for you.

VO:

Recycling mercury thermostats is quick and simple.

Bite of Steve Spinoso – Contractor

It's really not a big deal, it's not a special trip for me.

VO:

But like many contractors, Steve, for years, thought it would mean a special trip. Still, he knew throwing mercury thermostats in the garbage was not an option.

Bite of Steve Spinoso – Contractor

It's just common sense. Mercury, bad! Don't put it in the trash.

VO:

Instead take them to your local HVAC wholesaler for recycling. California law requires the wholesalers to collect mercury thermostats from HVAC and demolition contractors.

Bite of Robert Allen – HVAC Wholesaler

I think people really aren't aware that they need to be recycled, they need to be returned and processed.

Bite of Andre Algazi – DTSC

And that's because mercury is very toxic and especially the quantity in a thermostat, if it breaks, could cause real harm to people who are exposed and breathe the vapors.

VO:

Andre Algazi is a scientist with California's Department of Toxic Substances Control. He says when those mercury ampoules from thermostats are put into the regular trash; they wind up in landfills, where the vials leach the mercury into our water supply where it can convert into an even more toxic form that enters our food chain.

Bite of Andre Algazi – DTSC

It's tons of mercury released into our environment. That's why we have to have a law like this.

VO:

The law says HVAC and demolition contractors must handle mercury thermostats as universal waste. That means the out of service thermostat must be removed from the premises. It cannot be left with the consumer or thrown in with general waste. The thermostat should be placed in a container marked Universal Waste-Mercury Containing Equipment. The date of collection must be written on the container. If the thermostat is damaged it should be placed in a sealable container that is shatter resistant. All thermostats must be recycled within one year of their collection date. Most importantly, do not remove the mercury ampoule. Leave the ampoule and the thermostat intact. If you have loose ampoules in a sealed and properly marked container, check with your HVAC wholesaler in advance to make sure proper arrangements have been made for recycling the ampoules.

Bite of Steve Spinoso – Contractor

Why take it out? Leave the ampoule where it's protected, take the whole darn thermostat and get rid of it.

VO:

The place to get rid of the thermostat is at your local HVAC wholesaler. It is free to contractors. There's no paperwork for contractors to get signed off. And it won't cost contractors any extra time.

Bite of Steve Spinoso – Contractor

Because you're eventually going to pick up parts. When you pick up parts you drop off your thermostats.

VO:

Failure to comply could leave you facing up to a \$25 thousand fine. But the California Department of Toxic Substances Control believes contractors will do what's good for their business, and what's good for the environment.

Bite of Andre Algazi – DTSC

Looking at a single thermostat it might look like it's not a big deal. You have to look at the big picture. If we dispose of them in the trash, inappropriately, that mercury is going to be released and make the situation that we already have of contamination in our state and make it even worse.

VO:

Recycling mercury thermostats - it isn't a choice, it's the law.

Onscreen text/ VO:

For more information about recycling thermostats, contact thermostats@dtsc.ca.gov or call (800) 728-6942.