



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Department of Toxic Substances Control

News Release

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Barbara A. Lee, Director

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Manufacturers Agree to Improve Collection of Used Mercury-Containing Thermostats

SACRAMENTO— Twenty-five manufacturers will improve their collection methods of used thermostats that contain mercury, a potent neurotoxin, under an agreement announced today by the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC).

The manufacturers agreed to a Consent Order requiring them to develop an outreach plan and pilot projects to increase awareness and incentivize safe disposal of mercury-containing thermostats. DTSC expects these improvements will serve as a model for improving collection efforts in other states.

“This agreement provides an opportunity for DTSC and local government agencies to partner with the manufacturers to collect these thermostats and prevent the mercury in them from harming the public and the environment,” said Elise Rothschild, Deputy Director of DTSC’s Hazardous Waste Management Program. “DTSC appreciates the commitment that has been made by the manufacturers to improve their collection program and their level of effort in California.”

The Mercury Thermostat Collection Act of 2008 required manufacturers that had sold or distributed mercury-containing thermostats in California prior to 2006, to establish a program to collect and recycle the thermostats. The manufacturers used the Thermostat Recycling Corporation (TRC) to carry out their collection responsibilities.

DTSC adopted regulations that established annual performance requirements for the collection of mercury-containing thermostats that are becoming waste each year. The manufacturers, through TRC, failed to meet those requirements for 2013 and 2014, prompting DTSC to issue a Summaries of Violation to the manufacturers. The Consent Order settles those violations.

DTSC will be taking separate enforcement actions against five manufacturers who declined to sign the Consent Order.

Mercury is a potent neurotoxin that can cause significant harm to human health and the environment. Though no longer sold in California, an estimated 4 to 9 million mercury-containing thermostats are still in use in California homes and businesses. Mercury-containing thermostats may not be disposed in solid waste landfills. If you have a mercury containing thermostat that is being replaced and want to ensure the thermostat is sent to an appropriate collection location, please use the following website to find the nearest collection site:

<http://www.thermostat-recycle.org/zipsearch/>

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FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES: Contact the Department of Toxic Substances Control by phone at (800) 728-6942 or visit www.dtsc.ca.gov. To report illegal handling, discharge, or disposal of hazardous waste, call the Waste Alert Hotline at (800) 698-6942.

The mission of DTSC is to protect California's people and environment from harmful effects of toxic substances by restoring contaminated resources, enforcing hazardous waste laws, reducing hazardous waste generation, and encouraging the manufacture of chemically safer products.