



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
NEWS RELEASE

Department of Toxic Substances Control

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Health Care Sector to Recognize DTSC for its Mercury Reduction Program

For its groundbreaking mercury-reduction program, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) will receive the first Hospitals for a Healthy Environment (H2E) Achievement Award at the CleanMed Conference in Seattle, Washington, on April 18, 2006.

H2E selected DTSC for this honor for its highly successful Mercury (Hg) Elimination Leadership Program (HELP) initiated two years ago to reduce mercury from California medical facilities. Seventy-nine hospitals met the criteria for certification and removed approximately two tons of mercury.

Nearly 50 percent of all nationwide H2E – Mercury Free Award applicants during the project's span (2002-2005) are products of California's HELP Program. "This is not just a tribute to the imaginative leadership of DTSC and the Department of Health Services staff but also recognition of the many dedicated healthcare facilities and sponsoring local agencies who acknowledge the mercury threat and are willing to do something about it," said DTSC Director Maureen Gorsen.

"The California HELP Program is an example of a program with measurable results," wrote Laura Brannen, Executive Director for H2E. "In 2005 and so far in 2006, the Making Medicine Mercury Free Award applicants and many new partners are coming in from California! The number of awards, the new California partners of H2E and the data regarding mercury elimination in health care in the state is a result of your important work."

In order to complete DTSC's Mercury (Hg) HELP Program, medical facilities were required to do the following:

- Inventory all mercury devices and sources.
- Replace, at a minimum, 75 percent of the blood pressure cuffs, clinical mercury-containing devices, laboratory chemicals containing mercury, and the mercury laboratory thermometers inventoried. They also prepared a plan for total elimination of the remaining devices.
- Replace patient mercury thermometers with non-mercury containing devices.
- Develop and implement a fluorescent tube recycling program.

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- Develop and implement a mercury and alkaline battery collection program.
- Prepare and put into practice an Environmental Preferable Purchasing (EPP) statement that bans the purchase of mercury containing items without prior approval.

DTSC's Deputy Director Leonard E. Robinson and Hazardous Substances Scientist Mary Pride will accept the award on behalf of DTSC. They will be joining health care leaders from throughout the country at the annual CleanMed Conference.

"We are very pleased to receive the H2E Achievement Award and the recognition of our highly successful HELP Program," said DTSC Deputy Director Leonard Robinson. "When hospitals throw away mercury-containing devices such as fever thermometers, blood pressure cuffs, and other products, mercury can reenter the environment. In keeping with Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's Environmental Action Plan, DTSC is committed to pollution prevention measures that keep our environment clean and safe for generations to come."

H2E is a non-profit organization jointly founded by the American Hospital Association, the Environmental Protection Agency, Health Care Without Harm, and the American Nurses Association. H2E educates health care professionals about pollution prevention opportunities, rewards the sector's best performers, and provides a wealth of practical tools and resources to facilitate the industry's movement toward environmental sustainability.

To learn more about the Mercury (Hg) HELP Program, visit:
<http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/HazardousWaste/Mercury/HELP/index.html>.

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The Department of Toxic Substances Control's mission is to restore, protect, and enhance the environment and ensure public health, environmental quality and economic vitality by regulating hazardous waste, conducting and overseeing cleanups, and developing and promoting pollution prevention.