



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Department of Toxic Substances Control

News Release

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State releases regulations for recycling old mercury thermostats

Department of Toxic Substance Control says regulations protect public health and the environment

SACRAMENTO, CA – The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) today released final regulations for the collection and recycling of used thermostats containing toxic mercury.

“This is the first example of a takeback program with measureable performance goals that will increase the number of mercury thermostats that are collected,” said DTSC Director Deborah Raphael. “I’m very proud of the fact that California is again leading the way, and will be a model for other takeback programs.”

A 2006 state law banned the sale of new mercury-added thermostats. Mercury is a potent neurotoxin that, when released into the environment, can significantly harm human health and the environment. Though no longer sold in California, up to 10 million mercury-added thermostats are still in California homes and businesses.

State law also bans their disposal in solid-waste landfills, and a 2008 law, the Mercury Thermostat Collection Act, requires former producers of such thermostats to operate a collection and recycling program for those that become waste.

Under the new regulations, manufacturers are required to collect and recycle more than 32,500 mercury-containing thermostats in the second half of 2013, or 30 percent of the estimated total number of mercury thermostats that become waste. Recycling goals will increase annually for the next five years until 2017, when the goal is a 75 percent collection and recycling rate, or more than 147,000 mercury thermostats.

These goals reflect the legislative mandate for DTSC to establish goals resulting in the collection and recycling of the maximum feasible number of out-of-service mercury-added thermostats. These “extended producer responsibility” regulations focus on setting performance goals that the thermostat industry, rather than state and local government, is responsible for meeting.

The thermostat manufacturing industry currently operates a non-profit corporation, the Thermostat Recycling Corporation (TRC, <http://thermostat-recycle.org/>), for the purpose of collecting and properly disposing mercury-containing thermostats. TRC represents 30 manufacturers that historically distributed mercury-containing thermostats in the US.

This national program provides heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) distributors, retailers who sell thermostats, or household hazardous waste programs with mercury thermostat collection and recycling services. The new regulations require manufacturers who formerly sold mercury thermostats to meet these recycling goals either through participation in the TRC or an independently sponsored program.

The new regulations can be [found here](#).

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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 properties, identifying and promoting safer ingredients in consumer products, and ensuring stewardship through enforcement, regulation and pollution prevention.