

Mercury-Containing Thermostats

Environmental concerns with mercury-containing thermostats

Mercury-containing thermostats can contain levels of mercury that make them hazardous waste when disposed. Mercury is a toxic metal that can accumulate in living tissue and cause adverse health effects. Every year, Oregonians throw away thousands of mercury-containing thermostats in the garbage, making mercury-containing thermostats one of the largest sources of mercury in our landfills. When a mercury thermostat is broken or placed in a landfill or incinerator, mercury may be released into the environment. This may endanger people handling the broken thermostats or contaminate the air, ground surface or groundwater.

Household thermostats

Homeowners replacing their own mercury thermostats are encouraged to dispose of their thermostats at a household hazardous waste collection facility or hazardous waste collection event.

For additional information on management of mercury-containing household products, please check the DEQ Web page at www.deq.state.or.us/lq/sw/hhw/thermostats.htm

For information on household hazardous waste collection opportunities please call (503) 234-3000 in the Portland Metro area or toll-free at 1-800-732-9253 from other parts of the state.

Recycling waste mercury thermostats

For most businesses, governments and institutions, the best way to manage mercury thermostat waste is to recycle the thermostats using the Thermostat Recycling Corporation (TRC) collection program. Sponsored by thermostat manufacturers, the TRC program promotes the collection of mercury-containing thermostats for no charge at participating thermostat wholesalers. Only whole thermostats are collected by this program. For information on the TRC and the facilities collecting thermostats, please go to the TRC Web site: www.nema.org/gov/ehs/trc/

Managing waste thermostats

Waste mercury thermostats produced by non-households are classified as "universal waste" in Oregon. Management as universal waste simplifies the management of waste thermostats and encourages the collection and recycling of

these wastes. Proper universal waste management requires that the waste be managed in a manner that does not release mercury into the environment.

Universal waste thermostats have special management requirements that include storage time limits and labeling requirements.

- **Labeling and marking**

Containers holding universal waste thermostats or ampules removed from the thermostats must be labeled or marked clearly with one of the following phrases: "Universal Waste - Mercury Thermostat(s)," "Waste Mercury Thermostat(s)" or "Used Mercury Thermostat(s)."

- **Accumulation time**

Handlers generating universal waste, including universal waste thermostats, are prohibited from accumulating universal waste for more than one year. Accumulation of universal waste for longer than one year is permitted. The handler must be able to demonstrate to DEQ that additional time is needed to accumulate sufficient quantities as necessary to facilitate proper recovery, treatment or disposal. Usually, this is done by placing the date on the container holding the thermostats.

Complete universal waste management regulations can be found in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 40, Parts 273 and Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) Chapter 340, Division 113.

For further information on the management of universal waste, please go to DEQ's universal waste Web page at: www.deq.state.or.us/lq/hw/uw.htm

Proper disposal of waste thermostats

Waste mercury thermostats should be managed in a manner that ensures that mercury does not enter the environment. Proper disposal of the thermostat includes recycling it to recover the mercury for reuse. Proper management does not include disposal at a solid waste landfill or incinerator, breaking of the ampule containing the mercury, or burning.

Other waste management options

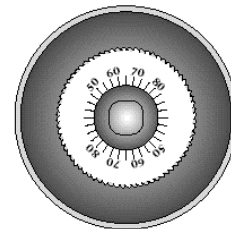
Businesses (including heating/cooling contractors and thermostat wholesalers) that do not recycle their mercury thermostats under the TRC recycling program may choose to manage



State of Oregon
Department of
Environmental
Quality

Land Quality Division Hazardous Waste Program

811 SW 6th Avenue
Portland, OR 97204
Phone: (503) 229-5913
(800) 452-4011
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www.oregon.gov/DEQ/



waste mercury thermostats using other waste management services. For a list of universal waste contractors, please check the Universal Waste Collector Web page at:
www.deq.state.or.us/lq/hw/uwcollectors.htm.

For more information

The following universal waste materials are available from DEQ at:
www.deq.state.or.us/lq/hw/uw.htm:

- *Universal Waste Rule*
- *Universal Waste Handler Fact sheet*
- *Universal Waste Battery Fact sheet*
- *Waste Pesticide Fact sheet*
- *Universal Waste Mercury-Containing Lamp Fact sheet*
- *Universal Waste Activity Notification Form*

Visit the DEQ Web page for additional information on mercury at:

www.deq.state.or.us/lq/mercury.htm

For additional universal waste and hazardous waste technical assistance, contact the DEQ regional office nearest you:

Eastern Region

Bend (541) 388-6146

Northwest Region

Portland (503) 229-5263

Western Region

Medford (541) 776-6010

Alternative formats

Alternative formats (Braille, large type, etc.) of this document can be made available. Contact the DEQ Office of Communications and Outreach, Portland, for more information at (503) 229-5696, or toll-free within Oregon at 1-800-452-4011.