

MERCURY SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE 2003 NHHW Conference

Introduction

The mercury subcommittee, chaired by Lauren Cole of the King County Solid Waste Division/Local Hazardous Waste Management Program, is a group of local and state government MRW professionals who are working on mercury issues for their jurisdiction. The subcommittee has been meeting since mid-2001, with the purpose of coordinating mercury efforts across the state. Subcommittee members share information about their projects to reduce overlap and to learn from one another. The subcommittee meets approximately once a month via conference call. If you are interested in participating in the mercury committee please contact Lauren Cole at 206-296-4363 or e-mail lauren.cole@metrokc.gov.

Project Summaries

Mercury subcommittee members' projects include work on fluorescent lamps, mercury fever thermometers and thermostats. A summary of some projects and contact information are provided below.

Susan McDonald, King County Water and Land Resources Division/Local Hazardous Waste Management Program (LHWMP) in King County GAIL.SAVINA@METROK.COV

Fluorescent Lamp Recycling Policy:

On April 22, 2003, King County Executive Ron Sims introduced a policy to ensure that all King County facilities recycle mercury-containing lamps above and beyond requirements of state and federal law.

The Mercury-Containing Lamp Recycling Policy establishes Executive Policy requiring all County facilities to recycle mercury-containing lamps, such as spent fluorescent tubes and high-intensity discharge lamps.

The policy exceeds recycling requirements set forth in federal and state law. For instance, County agencies will recycle "low-mercury" or "green tip" lamps that might otherwise be permitted in the trash. The policy also sets up systems to simplify the lamp recycling process.

<http://www.metrokc.gov/recelec/archives/policies/put73aep.htm>

Fluorescent Lamp Media Campaign:

LHWMP staff developed a public private partnership to promote fluorescent lamp recycling among businesses. We worked with 24 QFC grocery stores to recycle 50,000 fluorescent lamps. The campaign included a kick off event, and received media coverage in the major newspapers and on local TV and radio.

Scott Klag, Metro (Portland, Oregon), 503-797-1100, klags@metro.dst.or.us

Northwest Compact Fluorescent Lamp Recycling Project:

Portland Metro, Oregon DEQ, Zero Waste Alliance, and the local power utilities have been working on a project to facilitate the design of a pilot program to recycle compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) from residents in Oregon and/or Washington that would be replicable in the region. The project is a three-phase project. Phase I included data collection and research. Phase II developed the framework for a pilot project. Phase III will be implementation of the pilot. The pilot is on hold until an organization can be identified to begin the implementation process.

http://www.zerowaste.org/cfl/cfl_index.htm

Rachel Donnette, Thurston County, 360-754-4111 x7244, DONNETR@CO.THURSTON.WA.US

Mercury Fever thermometer exchange:

Thurston County hosted a fever thermometer exchange in February. They were unprepared for the large response, but found the program to be very successful. In total, they exchanged 3,000 thermometers and collected 4,000. They handed out the solar thermometer, and had a few that were defective as well as a few people who had difficulty using them. Rachel agreed with others' experiences that there were more elderly people receiving the solar thermometers than families with children. This could help explain part of the problem of difficulty with instructions, as the print was very small.

Vicki Bushnell, Kitsap County Public Works, 360-337-5777, vbushnell@co.kitsap.wa.us

Mercury Fever Thermometer Exchange:

Kitsap County's program to get mercury thermometers out of the hands of the public has removed 848 of the environmentally dangerous devices from local medicine cabinets and provided 679 digitals.

Lauren Cole, King County Solid Waste Division/Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County, 206-296-4363, lauren.cole@metrokc.gov

Mercury Fever Thermometer Exchange:

During the month of February 2003, LHWMP collected 34,000 mercury thermometers, and distributed 21,000 digitals. 46 King County pharmacies acted as collection sites and also 3 in Pierce County and 11 in Snohomish County.

Mercury Fever Thermometer Sales Ban:

The King County Board of Health enacted a ban on the sale of mercury fever thermometers that took effect on April 21, 2003.

Mercury survey:

We surveyed 697 Washington residents to find out what the public knows about mercury. We wanted to collect baseline data to measure the effectiveness of our programs. We found that over one third of residents did not know whether fluorescent lamps, and vehicle switches contained mercury. We also found that over half the respondents have manual thermostats in their homes and of those that would replace the thermostats themselves, 63% would throw them in the trash.

Gail Savina, King County Water and Land Resources Division/Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County, 206-263-3062, GAIL.SAVINA@METROK.COV

Thermostat Recycling Corporation (TRC) Thermostat Take Back program:

We are working to recruit HVAC wholesalers in King and Pierce Counties to collect thermostats. HVAC wholesalers are provided with bins for collecting thermostats, which TRC collects and recycles when they are full. We have visited HVAC wholesalers and asked them to participate in the take-back program. There are currently 18 participating.

Mercury in King County Report:

<http://www.metrokc.gov/hazwaste/mercury/links.html>

During the summer of 2002 LHWMP prioritized and set forth steps for the management of mercury-containing products at the county level. Our report is located at the above website.

Erik Blischke, Oregon DEQ, 503-229-5648, eric.blischke@state.or.us

Recreational mining – Erik is coordinating HHW collection events in July, and has been advertising these to recreational miners, who use mercury to uncover gold in some practices. Recreational mining is a fairly significant industry in southern Oregon, and there may be significant quantities of mercury collected.

Dental community outreach – Dentists are being encouraged to dispose of amalgam at HHW collection events. The intent is to make disposal as easy for dentists as possible. Erik attended a meeting of the Oregon Dental Association, which said that the biggest barrier to disposing of mercury is that they do not know what to do with it or where to take it once it's collected. Lauren asked if Oregon has considered regulating dentists. Erik commented that regulatory efforts will not work in Oregon, and that at this point, they would rather push voluntary efforts. Gail mentioned that all experiences, from King County, California, etc., show that dentists ultimately won't deal with proper mercury disposal issues if it is voluntary. She recommended that Oregon set goals for dentists' voluntary efforts to see if any progress is actually made, but if not, they need to encourage more regulatory efforts.

Industrial boiler project – Erik worked on a proposal with the OEC to provide tune-ups and energy audits to 20 independent boilers. He is still working on the details, but the work would primarily involve proper disposal of mercury from distillate oil burned in industrial boilers.