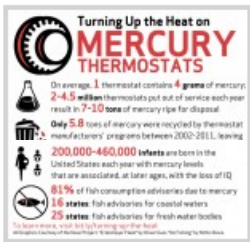




April 4, 2013

# Manufacturers' Thermostat Recycling Programs Fall Short



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A manufacturer-run program for collecting mercury thermostats is failing to keep the heavy metal out of the trash in most states, according to a new report released today by two environmental groups: the Multi-State Mercury Products Campaign (MMPC) and the Product Stewardship Institute (PSI).

[Turning up the Heat II](#) estimates that, at most, the industry recycling program has captured eight percent of mercury thermostats coming out of service in the past decade. This has resulted in the disposal of over 50 tons of mercury into the environment, which can expose people to the neurotoxin through fish consumption, according to the groups.

[Turning up the Heat II](#) used data from the annual report of the [Thermostat Recycling Corporation](#), a voluntary program created by manufacturers, to estimate the thermostat collection rates per capita for each state in 2009 through 2011. Results showed that TRC collected only 5.8 to 8 percent of the mercury thermostats coming out of service from 2002 to 2011.

In addition, of the 10 states with laws requiring mercury thermostat collection, only two—Maine and Vermont—had programs that were significantly more effective than states with no program at all. The Maine and Vermont programs require that manufacturers pay \$5 to contractors and homeowners who return mercury-added thermostats, resulting in significantly higher collection rates. After Vermont's \$5 incentive went into effect, the state rose to first in the nation for collection 2011.

"It's clear that a financial incentive, coupled with good education and outreach, has resulted in Vermont having one of the highest per-capita thermostat collection rates in the country," said Michael Bender, director of the Mercury Policy Project.

Connecticut is the latest state to pass a law pertaining to mercury thermostat collection. Passed on April 1, the law requires all mercury thermostats removed from service in Connecticut by HVAC contractors and technicians be recycled.

The law also requires all HVAC wholesale distributors with facilities in the state to act as a free collection point for waste mercury thermostats.

The Connecticut collection program is supported by 31 manufacturers participating in Thermostat Recycling Corporation and requires all manufacturers of mercury thermostats sold in the state to either individually or collectively participate in a program.

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In January, [more than 140 countries adopted](#) the first legally binding international agreement to control mercury emissions through a number of rules that place limits on power plants and industrial boilers as well as phase out products, such as batteries and thermometers, that use the toxic metal. The treaty, which was adopted in Geneva, establishes controls and sets reduction targets across a range of products, processes and industries where the toxic metal is used, released or emitted, the United Nations said.



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