

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 these items 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 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 website: <http://www.thermostat-recycle.org/>

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, Title 40, Parts 273 and Oregon Administrative Rule 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

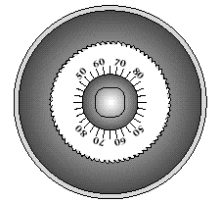
Businesses (including heating/cooling contractors and thermostat wholesalers) that do not recycle their mercury thermostats under the TRC recycling program may choose to manage waste mercury thermostats using other waste management services. For a list of universal waste contractors, please check the Universal



State of Oregon
Department of
Environmental
Quality

Hazardous Waste Program

811 SW 6th Avenue
Portland, OR 97204
Phone: (503) 229-6742
(800) 452-4011
Fax: (503) 229-6977
Contact: Dave Lebrun
www.oregon.gov/DEQ



Waste Collector Web page at:

www.deq.state.or.us/lq/hw/uwcollectors.htm.

DEQ regional offices and assistance

For more assistance, see the DEQ hazardous waste program specialist in your area.

Northwest Region office: 2020 SW Fourth Ave., Suite 400, Portland, OR 97201, 503-229-5263

Bend office: 475 Bellevue, Suite 110, Bend, OR 97701, 541-388-6146

Pendleton office: 800 SE Emigrant, Suite 330, Pendleton OR 97801, 541-276-4063

Salem office: 750 Front St. NE, Suite 120, Salem, OR 97310, 503-378-8240, ext. 253

Eugene office: 165 E. 7th Ave., Suite 100, Eugene OR 97401, 541-686-7838

Alternative formats

Alternative formats of this document can be made available. For more information, call 503-229-5696, Portland, or phone toll-free in Oregon at 1-800-452-4011, ext. 5696. Hearing-impaired persons may call 711.