

MERCURY POLICY PROJECT

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"MERCURY MILLENNIUM" PRODUCT PHASE OUT

Traditionally, manufacturers have not factored in the costs and impacts of mercury-added products on fish, wildlife, the environment, and people during breakage or disposal. Although no one knows the true price or degree of mercury pollution, *the rate of a gram of atmospheric mercury currently deposited annually per 20 acre surface area lake in the U.S. has resulted in fish consumption advisories for mercuryⁱ in 40 states.*

So before the problem gets worse (*mercury levels have increased 3-fold over the last century, with mercury concentrations in fish increasing at an average rate of 5% per year since 1970ⁱⁱ*), decision-makers should resolve to start the next century off right with a commitment to a "mercury millennium" product phase out. As outlined below, more than half of the mercury disposed annually into municipal solid waste nationally could be eliminated by phasing out the manufacture of non-essential mercury-added products.

Mercury-Added Product	Annual Tonnage of Mercury Disposed into MSW in U.S. ⁱⁱⁱ	Product Alternative with No Added Mercury	Cost Difference for Non-Mercury Product
Thermometers	18 ^{iv}	digital thermometers	\$4 more and up
Thermostats	9 ^v	digital thermostats	\$8 more and up
Car Switches	11 ^{vi}	ball switches	\$0.09 more ^{ix}
Fluorescent Lamps ^{viii}	16 ^{vii}	none	--

ⁱ "Assessment of Mercury Contamination in Selected Minnesota Lakes and Streams", Report to the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources, Executive Summary, MPCA, 1989

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Not including batteries; according to MA & FL DEP officials, batteries will remain the largest source of mercury in MSW until 2000, but mercury in discards will nearly be eliminated by 2005 due to state laws and the 1996 federal law banning the sale of most mercury-added batteries

^{iv} 1997 USEPA Mercury Study Report to Congress, Volume 2, Table 4-5, p.4-19

^v Ibid.

^{vi} 1995 American Automobile Manufacturers Association estimate of mercury quantities used in switches

^{vii} 1997 USEPA Mercury Study Report to Congress, Volume 2, Table 4-5, p.4-19

^{viii} Recycling rates for fluorescent lamps are approximately 10% in the U.S. compared with between 50%-70% in most European countries due, in part, to active manufacture support

^{ix} General Motors WE CARE Case Study, Elimination of Mercury Switches in Underhood and Trunk Lamps