



Town of Swampscott

OFFICE OF THE Health Department

TRASH & RECYCLING DIVISION

Jeff Vaughan – Director of Public Health

MERCURY (Hg) & MERCURY-ADDED PRODUCTS

Note: Mercury-added products cannot be disposed of in trash when they reach the end of their useful life. (MA-DEP 2008)

Why is it important to keep mercury out of the trash? Mercury is a toxic metal. When products containing mercury are discarded at the end of their useful lives, the mercury is released into the air when products break. Solid waste disposal facilities (e.g., trash incinerators, landfills), manufacturing facilities that use mercury in their production processes, and coal-fired power plants can also release mercury into the air. Airborne mercury is deposited on land as well as in lakes and ponds, where it can be eaten by fish and, in turn, by people and wildlife. Mercury that is discharged in wastewater ends up in sewage sludge, which is either burned in an incinerator or applied to land as a soil amendment. In both cases, rain can wash mercury into lakes, ponds, and streams.

The following items must be handled as either hazardous waste or as universal waste:

- Thermometers w/ silver liquid
- Thermostats w/ silver liquid in glass cylinder, not digital
- Button batteries
- Sphygmomanometers (i.e. blood pressure cuffs)
- Neon lamps and some fluorescent lamps, such as 4ft straight tubes, u-tubes, circular tubes
- Electrical switches
- Bilge pumps and sump pumps (some contain mercury switches)
- Tilt switches and mercury thermocouples if removed from appliances / white goods

The following items must be properly recycled (not curbside)

- Green cap fluorescent lamps and compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs)**
- Electronic devices with screens that are backlit using a fluorescent lamp, such as: Flat panel computer monitors, flat panel TVs, Handheld gaming devices, Portable DVD players

These items must be handled as hazardous waste:

- Elemental mercury
- Glass ampoules of mercury removed from devices

Residents of Swampscott can drop off any of the **RED highlighted mercury-added materials listed above** at the Health Department Office during regular business hours.

****fluorescent bulbs/tubes 4ft or smaller only, do not bring in broken bulbs.** Call office for larger bulbs.