

NEWS RELEASE

**Mercury
Policy Project**



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VT Gov. Shumlin signs mercury producer responsibility law

Creates manufacturer-based recycling program for mercury-containing light bulbs

BARRE – Gov. Peter Shumlin today signed into law a bill requiring manufacturers of mercury-containing lamps to establish and finance a recycling program for spent bulbs from residents and small businesses. With today’s signing at Nelson Ace Hardware in Barre, Vermont becomes the third state in the country to establish such an extended producer responsibility (EPR) program.

The Governor said the new law is an important environmental measure, key in helping protect Vermont’s waterways and natural environment from the problems associated with mercury pollution. Under the new law, recycling costs will be paid by the manufacturer, consistent with other product stewardship legislation enacted in Vermont and around the country.

Mercury-containing lamps, such as compact fluorescent bulbs, have significant benefits in terms of energy efficiency and cost-savings. However, these bulbs also contain small amounts of mercury – a known neurotoxin - which makes proper recycling of the lamps critically important.

“Keeping mercury out of the waste stream has been a high priority for solid waste districts and alliances, but it has come at a significant cost. This law will ensure that we can continue our programs with a funding source provided by manufacturers rather than taxpayers,” said Jen Holliday, Environmental Safety Compliance Manager of the Chittenden Solid Waste District and Vice President of the Product Stewardship Institute.

Along with earlier laws passed in Maine and Washington, the approach taken in Vermont provides a financially sustainable means of preventing the release of mercury into the environment by recycling lamps and keeping them out of landfills and incinerators. This industry funded approach will be increasingly important as state and local agencies around the country

face growing budget cuts, while anticipating increased use of CFLs under new federal lighting efficiency standards, scheduled to take effect in 2012.

“With the federal phase-in of higher efficiency standards just around the bend, we’re likely to see a significant increase in the use - and subsequent disposal - of CFLs and other bulbs containing mercury,” said Michael Bender of the Mercury Policy Project and Green Lighting Campaign. “Vermont’s law ensures that lamp makers ‘see the light,’ ‘pay to play,’ and practice EPR.”

There are more than 60 state producer responsibility laws around the country that require product manufacturers to provide for the collection and recycling of electronics, mercury thermostats, mercury auto switches, and other products that cause unintended environmental impacts if not properly managed. Additionally, like Vermont’s new law, laws requiring mercury content standards have been adopted in California and Maine, modeled after new standards recently adopted by the European Union.

For more information on the Mercury Policy Project, call (802) 223-9000 or visit our website: <http://mercurypolicy.org/>. For more information on the Product Stewardship Institute (PSI) or any of their projects, call 617-236-4855 or visit www.productstewardship.us. To view PSI’s EPR legislation map, see: <http://productstewardship.us/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=790>. Vermont’s new mercury law can be found on the web at: http://mercurypolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/2011_vt_hg_law.pdf and for the EU mercury content standards, see: http://mercurypolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/eu_hg_content_standards.pdf.

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About the Mercury Policy Project (MPP): The Mercury Policy Project (MPP) works to promote policies to eliminate mercury uses, reduce the export and trafficking of mercury, and significantly reduce mercury exposures at the local, national, and international levels. We strive to work harmoniously with other groups and individuals who have similar goals and interests

About The Product Stewardship Institute (PSI): PSI is a national non-profit membership-based organization located in Boston, Massachusetts. PSI works with state and local government agencies to partner with manufacturers, retailers, environmental groups, federal agencies, and other key stakeholders to reduce the health and environmental impacts of consumer products. PSI takes a unique product stewardship approach to solving waste management problems by encouraging product design changes and mediating stakeholder dialogues.