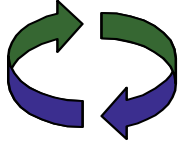




SIERRA CLUB
CALIFORNIA



California Product Stewardship Council

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Contact: Bill Magavern
916-557-1100, x102
Heidi Sanborn
(916) 402-3911

New Bill Would Give Consumers Ways to Recycle Old Mercury Thermostats

Most Californians have no idea how to recycle old mercury-containing thermostats, even though state law bans mercury waste from being thrown in the trash. New legislation introduced by Assemblymember Ira Ruskin with the support of Sierra Club California and the California Product Stewardship Council would give consumers free and convenient options for recycling their waste thermostats in an environmentally-responsible manner.

The Mercury Thermostat Collection Act of 2008, Assembly Bill 2347, would allow Californians to return their waste thermostats to any location that sells new thermostats. Companies that make new thermostats for sale in the state would pick up most of the costs for the recycling program.

Bill Magavern, Director of Sierra Club California, hailed the legislation: “Most people want to do the right thing when it’s time to get rid of hazardous household products. Assemblymember Ruskin’s bill would finally provide free and convenient options for recycling mercury thermostats.”

“Cash-strapped local governments have had to pay for hazardous product waste management for too long,” added Heidi Sanborn, Director of the California Product Stewardship Council. “AB 2347 establishes a model policy for extended producer responsibility that requires the companies that profit from products to pay for end-of-life disposition. These programs are commonplace in Europe, Canada, Japan and other industrialized countries”

“There is a serious threat to public health from mercury, and it is time for the companies who have profited from selling these products to take responsibility for their disposal. Mercury pollution has already contaminated the waters of the San Francisco Bay and Bay Area watersheds, and high levels of mercury make many of the fish that swim in these polluted waters unsafe for human consumption. My bill will greatly reduce the amount of mercury from thermostats that is allowed to pollute our environment,” Assemblymember Ruskin said.

Mercury thermostats should be kept out of our air and water because on average they contain over 3,000 milligrams of the toxin (for purposes of comparison, fluorescent light bulbs contain around 5 milligrams). It is estimated that only 5 percent of California’s mercury thermostats are properly managed. The San Francisco Bay and delta, Tomales Bay, and eight other county water bodies currently have fish consumption advisories due to mercury contamination. Sales of new mercury thermostats have been banned in California since 2006. Waste thermostats are classified as hazardous waste but are usually discarded into the solid waste stream, as recycling options are inconvenient and poorly publicized at present.