



5 STEPS TO STARTING A MERCURY THERMOSTAT COLLECTION PROGRAM

Why should my store provide a mercury thermostat collection/recycling service?

While mercury thermostats are no longer sold in most places, the long life of this product means that there are millions of these products that will be removed and disposed of when homes and other buildings are renovated or demolished, or the occupants choose new, non-mercury, programmable thermostats. Each mercury thermostat contains on average four grams of mercury. Because mercury is a potent neurotoxin, recycling of these thermostats is encouraged by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and required in some states and counties. Dropping off old thermostats at a local retailer is a convenient way for consumers to recycle and keeps mercury out of our landfills and incinerators.

More and more retailers around the country are starting to provide their customers with recycling services because it is the “right thing to do” and provides the following benefits:

- Increase foot traffic by providing yet another reason for a customer to visit the store. (While retailers have not collected hard data on this, many cite this anecdotally.)
- Generate positive attention in local media and enhance the community or environmental image of the store.
- Help your customers to “be green” by giving them a chance to take action for the environment.
- Promote the sale of new, energy efficient (more expensive!) thermostat models in conjunction with publicizing the recycling opportunity.
- While there are new procedures to learn and information to share, recycling programs are simple to implement and provide an added service without detracting from the mission of the store.

Okay, I'd like to provide a mercury thermostat recycling service to my customers to help keep mercury out of the environment. What should I do?

1. Contact the Thermostat Recycling Corporation to purchase your collection bin for a one-time charge of \$25.00.

- Call **800-238-8192** or click [here](#) to request a collection container from the Thermostat Recycling Corporation (TRC). You will need to pay a one-time charge of \$25.00, which includes the initial and future containers, shipping (via FedEx), and product recycling services. When the box is full, you will follow the instructions included with it to ship it back to TRC and receive a replacement at no additional charge. (TRC is a manufacturer-run program to provide a simple and accessible collection system for mercury thermostat recycling.)
- Find a place off the store floor to locate the collection box(es), and follow all instructions provided by TRC and FedEx. Employees should place the thermostats in the boxes for customers -- do not put the box on the store floor where the public can access it.

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2. Consider liability.

- Legal liability may be an issue of potential concern to retailers participating in collection and/or recycling activities in states where retailers are frequently sued by private attorneys. You may decide to address the need for increased liability coverage to cover the cost of potential actions by employees or customers alleging they were harmed by exposure to mercury released during product breakage incidents. Remember that the products being returned may have been sold and used in your store already! PSI is not aware to date of any cases where a retailer has been sued because of any incident related to collecting mercury thermostats.

3. Educate your employees.

- Educate employees about the program during staff meetings, signage in employees-only areas (such as a break room, for example), and the employee manual.
- Be sure all employees know what kind of thermostats can be accepted, where to put them, and not to collect damaged thermostats (or mercury capsules that have been removed).
- Remind them to promote the program to customers purchasing new thermostats - maybe the customer is replacing the old one, and will come back to the store to recycle it.

4. Call your local or state environmental agency.

- Call your local state or environmental agency to let them know you are providing this service and ask the following questions. You can find a list of state agency contacts on the EPA's website at: <http://www.epa.gov/epahome/state.htm>.
 - "Are there any regulations I should know about that relate to my mercury thermostat recycling project?" Regulations vary state-by-state, but generally following the instructions provided by TRC will suffice.
 - "Can you list my store on your website or other materials as a recycling location for consumers?"

5. Promote your program.

- Information about the recycling opportunity can be included in newspaper ads or inserts, store signage, and radio or television commercials.
- Include the recycling service in sales promotions for new, energy efficient thermostats.
- Partner with a local utility or local government agency promoting upgrades of heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems.
- Your store can be listed as a collection site on Earth911.com. Contact them directly through their website or email them at clientrelations@earth911.com if you have any questions.

This document is based on a pilot retail collection project conducted at Ace stores in Utah, Montana, and South Dakota in partnership with PSI (www.productstewardship.us) and Women's Voices for the Earth (www.womenandenvironment.org), and PSI's eight years of experience working with retailers on product take-back. Funding for this initiative was provided by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 8.