
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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Collection and Recycling of Mercury Thermostats

For many years, thermostats used internal mercury tilt switches. The average mercury thermostat contains about 3-4 grams of mercury. Manufacturers have developed mercury-free digital thermostats to replace mercury thermostats. The Thermostat Recycling Corporation (TRC) has a program to collect the mercury thermostat being replaced. The mercury within those thermostats is removed and recycled.

When mercury-added thermostats are discarded in trash that is incinerated, mercury is emitted to the air during combustion. Mercury is highly toxic to humans and wildlife. It accumulates in the tissues of fish and other organisms inhabiting mercury-contaminated waters and builds up in the tissues of organisms higher up the food chain, including humans.

In 2001, New Hampshire passed [RSA 149-M:53](#) which began the prohibition on the sale of certain mercury products. In 2007, the sale of mercury-added measuring devices, which included mercury thermostats was also prohibited. The Legislature also passed [RSA 149-M:58](#) that bans the *disposal* of all mercury products, including all thermostats, in residential and industrial solid waste. In 2008, the Legislature enacted a mandatory thermostat recycling program. In addition to prohibiting the installation of mercury-added thermostats, there are three main components of the law:

- 1) Thermostat **manufacturers** must develop or provide a mercury thermostat collection and recycling program as well as outreach and education to increase thermostat recycling.
- 2) Thermostat **wholesalers** must serve as collection points for out-of-service mercury thermostats and provide information to contractors about the recycling program.
- 3) **Contractors or service technicians** responsible for removing mercury-added thermostat as a result of new construction, renovation, maintenance installation of a new heating or cooling system, or any similar activity must remove the thermostat from the premises and recycle or properly dispose of the thermostat as a hazardous waste. (Note: disposing of the mercury thermostats as a hazardous waste is a much more expensive option than recycling as described below.)

Thermostat Collection and Recycling

For a one-time fee of \$25, the Thermostat Recycling Corporation offers collection, transportation and recycling of out-of-service mercury thermostats. The fee helps to covers the cost of the bin, return mailing costs and thermostat recycling costs. When the bin is filled and returned, TRC automatically provides replacement bins, free of charge, for as long as the purchaser participates. This program satisfies the manufacturers' obligations and provides a convenient and inexpensive way for wholesalers and contractors to comply with the law as well. Many transfer stations also have TRC bins.

Bins can be ordered three ways: online at [Thermostat Recycling Corporation](#); by phone at 1-888-266-0550; or by e-mailing TRC at trc@thermostat-recycle.org.