

Benefits of a Mercury Pollution Prevention Program in your Hospital

SOURCE: Reducing Mercury Use in Health Care

Addresses Human Health Concerns About Mercury in the Environment

- There are human health impacts due to eating mercury-contaminated fish and fish consumption advisories due to mercury
- Health professionals practice preventive medicine for public health

Reduces Discharges of Mercury into the Environment

- Discharge to the air from incineration, and deposition of the airborne mercury back to the ground or water
- Discharge of mercury in wastewater to sewage treatment plants, and from there to:
 - A waterway, or
 - The air if sludge is incinerated, or
 - The soil if sludge is land spread

Helps to Avoid the need for Future Environmental Regulations

- As a result of the Federal Great Lakes Water Quality Guidance (also referred to as the Great Lakes initiative), New York State adopted a stricter water quality standard for mercury that allows virtually no discharge of mercury.
- The Hospital may not be able to meet stricter state standards for discharge to the sewage treatment plant without action.
- Implementing best management practices now can help to avoid the need for increased regulations in the future.

Produces Hospital Operations Efficiencies

- Mercury Pollution Prevention avoids:
 - Disruption of services due to spills
 - High disposal costs of mercury
 - Need to train staff for handling mercury
 - Cost of end-of-pipe treatment that may be needed to meet upcoming regulations
- Mercury alternatives are becoming more readily available and in many cases cheaper.

Demonstrates Leadership

- Your Hospital is a leader in the local medical community.

Examples of What Some Hospitals Are Doing

- See tables

Mercury Pollution Prevention in Select Michigan Hospitals

(Table compiled by the National Wildlife Federation, August 1995)

Pollution Prevention Actions	Bronson, Kalamazoo	Butterworth, Grand Rapids	Henry Ford, Detroit	Genesys, Flint	Riverside, Trenton	U.Michigan Ann Arbor	Corning Labs, Grand Rapids
Administrative directives- (formal vs. Informal)	✓ F	✓ F	✓ F	✓ F	✓ I	✓ I	✓ F
Clean Drain traps/catch basins			✓		✓		✓
Educate Staff	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Install energy efficient lighting			✓		✓	✓	
Inventory mercury uses		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Mercury-free Batteries	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Purchase new mercury free sphygmomanometers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A
Replace broken sphygmomanometers with mercury free units	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A
Replace mercury thermometers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Separate wastes		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Substitute pathology lab reagents					✓		✓
Training on spill prevention and management	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Mercury Pollution Prevention Activities In Select North American Health Care Facilities
 (Table Compiled by Margy Peet, Monroe County Department of Health, Rochester, NY)

Pollution Prevention Actions	Princeton Hospitals, Princeton NJ	Facilities participating in the MWRA/MASCO mercury work group	Hospitals for sick children, Toronto Hospital & Centenary Health center	St.Mary's Hospital, Duluth Minnesota	13 Wisconsin Hospitals
Clean Drain traps	✓	✓		✓	
Waste piping power washing		✓			
MOU with POTW(MWRA) to suspend sewer discharge compliance enforcement		✓			
Inventory mercury uses/waste reduction assessment		✓			✓
Prepared facilities Loadings Report, Pretreatment Guidance Manual, Technology Identification Report and Mercury Management Guidebook		✓			
Database of mercury content of 8,000 products		✓			
MOU with Government,adopt plans and timetables to reduce or eliminate mercury			✓		
Cost-Effective Alternatives Project			✓		
Replaced Mercury thermometers & sphygmomanometers				✓	
Education materials for employees				✓	
Work Group for support & problem solving					✓

