

1. Environmental Science 2008

2. Pennsylvania State Bill Proposal: Mercury Switch Removal Act

3. The disposal of mercury-containing products allows mercury to enter the environment uncontained, having disproportionate harmful effects on children and pregnant women who consume water and food contaminated by it.

4. Although Pennsylvania has proposed legislation to limit mercury emissions due to coal-burning plants, there is no current legislation regulating other mercury-containing products.

5. My proposed "Mercury Switch Removal Act," which I plan to submit to the Pennsylvania state legislature, calls for a recycling program for car switches that contain mercury. This proposed legislation will be based on similar mercury-switch legislation that have been passed by other states such as Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, California, and New Jersey.

6. There is no deadline for this legislative proposal. My proposal will be sent to: Representative Camille George, Majority Chairman of the Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, 38B East Wing, PO Box, 202074, Harrisburg, PA 17120-2074

7. This is an important environmental-justice issue because ingested mercury can result in damage to the central nervous system, heart, lungs, kidneys, and immune system of children who are exposed to it (US EPA 2006).

#### 8. Argument-Objection-Response Chunks

Argument 1: Pennsylvania should enact legislation that requires the removal of mercury-containing car switches before cars are junked, because the mercury in these switches is ultimately released into the environment (US EPA 2006).

Objection 1: Mercury-containing car switches often have less than one gram of mercury, and therefore their environmental impact is minimal (Johnston 2006).

Response 1: It is estimated that over 700 tons of mercury are contained in the switches of vehicles that are currently driven in the United States, which will eventually end up in the air and waterways if they are not removed before the car is crushed (PA DEP 2006).

Argument 2: Pennsylvania should enact legislation that requires the removal of mercury-containing car switches because it is one of the leading states in mercury pollution, and by removing mercury-containing car switches, it can significantly reduce the amount of mercury that is released into the environment (US EPA 2001).

Objection 2: In 2003, car manufacturers stopped producing mercury-containing switches, so Pennsylvania legislation of this kind would be obsolete in about a decade (US EPA 2006).

Response 2: In one year, Pennsylvanians dispose of approximately 350,000 cars with mercury-containing switches, roughly equivalent to 780 pounds of mercury that may be released into the environment (Clean Car Campaign 2004). [KSF: BETTER NOT TO USE LAST NGO SOURCE]

Argument 3: Pennsylvania should enact legislation that requires the removal of mercury-containing car switches because the removal and recycling of mercury switches would not significantly increase the amount of time spent in the automotive recycling process (Johnston 2006).

Objection 3: Recycling car switches from vehicles is a two-step process, involving the removal of the car switch and the removal of the pellet from within the switch, which may require automobile recyclers to hire additional workers (Michigan Switch Study 2002).

Response 3: The two-step procedure for removing car switches takes less than 95 seconds to perform and the minimal additional time required by workers would be compensated by financial incentives (Michigan Switch Study 2002).

Argument 4: Pennsylvania should enact legislation that requires the removal of mercury-containing car switches because it will reduce mercury environment levels without being a financial burden on automobile recycling firms, and instead will be paid for by the vehicle manufacturers (Maine Statute 1999).

Objection 4: Vehicle manufacturers will not be willing to pay the required fees for the removal and recycling of mercury-containing switches, and the automobile recycling firms will not feel that the compensation is adequate (Gaither 2004).

Response 4: Both the Alliance of Automotive Manufacturers and the Automotive Recyclers Association have already demonstrated commitment to recycling mercury switches nationally (AAM 2005, ARA 2007).

## 9. References

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