

NEWS RELEASE

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Hardware Stores Say, “Bring back the light”

“Free” recycling promoted with bulb giveaway to highlight need for a sustainable funding source

Today, two hardware stores in Barre and South Burlington are highlighting the state’s “free” recycling program for mercury-containing light bulbs by giving away a hundred CFLs per store to anyone who brings in fluorescent lamps for recycling on a first come, first serve basis with a limit of one bulb per person. The event is also being held to spotlight the need for a sustainable fund to cover the program.

“This program is a win-win for everyone involved,” said Rick Bibens of South Burlington Bibens Ace Hardware. “Customers can recycle their bulbs for free, mercury stays out of the landfill, and our business gets more foot-traffic.”

“We want our customers to know that this service exists and so we’re encouraging them to ‘bring back the light’,” said Bob Nelson, owner of Nelson Ace Hardware in Barre. “There is nothing like a free giveaway to draw attention to an issue.”

“Hardware stores are doing their part, but not much is really free these days. And state budgets are strained to the max,” said Michael Bender, director of Mercury Policy Project. “It’s high time manufacturers ‘see the light’ and start doing their part to cover bulb recycling costs.”

Also attending the promotional giveaway in South Burlington was Senator Virginia Lyons of Chittenden County. As Chair of the Senate Natural Resources Committee, Senator Lyons will be considering a bill (S.232 / H.94) on a long term funding source for mercury-lamp recycling this session.

“The retailer recycling program run by the State and Efficiency Vermont is top-notch, but without a sustainable funding source this program won’t be able to continue. Vermonters have been financing recycling for years now and it’s only fair for lamp makers to participate as well,” said Senator Lyons.

Efforts to encourage energy efficiency in the state have dramatically increased the demand for fluorescent lamps and, in turn, are starting to result in significant increases in the disposal of mercury-containing bulbs. Mercury, a known neurotoxin that can build up in our bodies and the environment, is expensive to handle and dispose of properly.

Vermont’s solid waste management districts are also struggling with the increasing costs of recycling spent bulbs. In 2008, Chittenden County Solid Waste District alone spent more than \$22,000 to recycle fluorescent bulbs.

“Solid waste districts, the State, and ultimately the tax payers, should not continue to bear the burden of recycling mercury-containing lamps on our own,” said Jen Holliday, environmental and safety compliance manager with the Chittenden Solid Waste District.

-more, more, more-

“We need a sustainable funding source to keep discarded products that contain toxics out of the landfill,” said Holliday, “It only makes sense that the producers of these products are held accountable to fund the system that takes back their products when consumers are done with them. We need legislation that will level the playing field and hold all manufacturers accountable to fund that system.”

The Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee is slated to hear S.232/ H.94 in the next several weeks. The bill would require lamp manufacturers to share in the cost and responsibility of recycling their products. The legislature has experience with shared responsibility models and even passed a bill in 2008 that included the manufacturers of mercury-containing thermostats in the collection and recycling process.

“This is consistent with collection programs for mercury auto switches and thermostats, where manufacturers now pay their share of recycling,” said Senator Lyons. “Consumers, retailers, local governments, and manufacturers should all share in the costs of dealing with the waste. Right now, the only people that haven’t stepped up to the plate are the manufacturers.”

The bulbs were donated by Efficiency Vermont, there is a limit of one new CFL give away per person and the program runs while supplies last or until 5 PM Friday, January 29th; whichever comes first.

For more information, see: www.mercurypolicy.org.

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