

NEWS RELEASE

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Vermont legislature passes bill to create extended producer responsibility recycling program for mercury-containing light bulbs

On Thursday, the Senate gave final approval to a bill that requires manufacturers of mercury-containing lamps to establish and finance a free and convenient recycling program for their spent bulbs from residents and small businesses. Pending the Governor's approval, Vermont will become the third state in the country to establish such a program.

"Removing mercury from the environment protects Vermont's public health," said Senator Virginia Lyons (D-Chittenden), lead sponsor of the legislation (S. 34) and Chair of the Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee. "This law will help continue an important lamp recycling program, supported by municipal solid waste districts and local hardware stores."

"Protecting our waterways and other natural resources from mercury exposure is vitally important to the health of our environment," said Representative David Deen (D-Windham-5), Chair of the House Committee on Fish, Wildlife, and Water Resources. "S.34 helps to ensure that this happens."

Mercury-containing lamps, such as compact fluorescent bulbs, have significant benefits in terms of energy efficiency, and environmental organizations support and even encourage their continued use. However, these bulbs also contain small amounts of mercury – a known neurotoxin - which makes properly disposing of the lamps critically important.

"This bill will not only keep toxic mercury out of our environment, but it ensures that manufacturers also contribute to the growing costs of recycling these bulbs," said Charity Carbine, Environmental Health Advocate for Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG). "Our legislators deserve praise for their commitment to this bright idea."

Vermont's current infrastructure for recycling mercury-bulbs is first-rate. Vermonters can properly dispose of their bulbs at solid waste districts and participating retail stores.

"Keeping mercury out of the waste stream has been a high priority for solid waste districts and alliances but it has come at a significant cost. This will ensure that we can continue our programs with a funding source provided by manufacturers rather than taxpayers," said Jen Holliday of the Chittenden Solid Waste District and Vermont Product Stewardship Council.

Under S.34, recycling costs will be paid by the manufacturer, consistent with other product stewardship legislation that Vermont has enacted.

“With the federal phase in of higher efficiency standards just around the bend, we’re likely to see a significant increase in the use and disposal of CFLs and other mercury-containing bulbs,” said Michael Bender of the Mercury Policy Project and Green Lighting Campaign. “Vermont’s legislation will ensure that bulbs are collected and that lamp makers share in that responsibility.”

For more information on lamp recycling, contact your municipal solid waste district or participating local retail store:

<http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/wastediv/solid/swmdlist.htm>

<http://www.newbulbintown.com/>

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