

MERCURY: WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Mercury is a toxic chemical that accumulates in our bodies and never breaks down into non-toxic forms. Mercury can damage several parts of the body, including the liver, kidneys, and especially the brain, where it may cause neurological disorders. It should not be released into the environment. Some common sources of mercury are:

- ◆ Power Plants that burn coal, releasing mercury into the air;
- ◆ Dentists that discharge mercury-amalgam down the drain; and
- ◆ Households that discard fluorescent lamps, thermostats, etc. in the garbage.

Once mercury is released into the air, water, or ground, it moves through the environment and is absorbed by plants and animals. Mercury bioaccumulates, that is, small amounts build up in the environment over time, and easily moves up the food chain as larger animals eat smaller animals. Mercury bioaccumulates in fish, which is the main way people ingest it.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Common Mercury-added Products:

<http://www.des.nh.gov/nhppp/Mercury/HgProducts.asp>

HHW schedule: <http://www.des.nh.gov/HHW/>

True Value: www.des.nh.gov/nhppp/Mercury/default.asp?link=lamp

Thermostat Recycling Program: <http://www.des.nh.gov/nhppp/trc.htm>

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