

# THERMOSTAT DISPOSAL



Thermostats are considered hazardous waste due to the mercury content. It is important to ensure they are disposed of appropriately.

If you have a central heating, cooling or HVAC unit in your home, you have a thermostat installed for regulating the indoor air temperature.



 Most thermostats containing mercury are manual thermostats— they have dials or levers that you need to adjust when you want to change the indoor temperature. There is mercury inside the sealed glass "tilt switch".  


Older thermostats containing mercury are being phased out by greener and more effective models such as electronic programmable thermostats. If you have a thermostat with a digital readout, it probably does not contain mercury.

## Danger of Mercury Thermostats in the Trash:

Problems arise after trash bags are collected, compacted and then landfilled. It is likely that the mercury bulb within the thermostat will bust at some point, and mercury will escape. Mercury does not break down. It gets into the ground water and becomes concentrated in our food supply, and in people.

## Disposal of Mercury-containing Thermostats:

-  Mercury-containing thermostats are recyclable.
-  In 2008, mercury thermostat collection legislation passed in Pennsylvania requiring manufacturers to establish collection programs for contractor and consumer-generated mercury thermostats.

### The legislation also requires:

- HVAC wholesale distributors & demolition contractors to recycle all mercury thermostats removed during service.
- Contractors & retailers are required to either participate as collection points **-OR** provide notice to customers that recycling of mercury thermostats is required under law, and identify locations of nearby collection points.
- HVAC wholesale distributor are prohibited from selling any thermostat unless their location(s) are acting as a collection point for waste mercury thermostats.



In Pennsylvania, the sale, installation and disposal of mercury thermostats is prohibited due to its highly toxic nature. The recycling of mercury thermostats is required by law and it is illegal to dispose Mercury-containing thermostats in or your trash.

 Mercury exposure in children and adults can result in neurological and behavioral issues, kidney toxicity, digestive tract and lung issues. Mercury can be fatal if inhaled or ingested.

## Does your Thermostat Contain Mercury?

To determine if your thermostat contains mercury, remove the cover and look for a clear glass bulb (ampoule), containing a silvery liquid inside. This sealed glass bulb is called a mercury switch and is burrowed within the wiring beneath the cover. The silvery substance inside of the bulb is mercury.



## Where to take your Mercury-containing Thermostats:

- The Thermostat Recycling Coalition (TRC) is one of the easiest and cheapest way to comply with Pennsylvania Law. To participate, bring your mercury containing thermostat to any TRC collection location for disposal. Visit [www.thermostat-recycle.org](http://www.thermostat-recycle.org) to search for nearby locations.
- Some health clinics, pharmacies and doctor's offices have thermometer exchange programs that will give you a new mercury-free fever thermometer in exchange for your old one.
- Mercury -containing thermostats are accepted at county Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) and Electronics Collection events. Fees may apply.

By placing your old thermostat in a sealable container such as a plastic bag or tupperware container, it will prevent vapors from being breathed in if the mercury bulb breaks inside the device.

