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Title: *National Thermostat Product Stewardship Initiative*

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Session 2C: Phasing-out Sales of & Collecting Mercury-added Thermostats

National Thermostat Product Stewardship Initiative

A typical mercury thermostat contains 3 grams of mercury that can be released into the environment if the thermostat is broken or improperly disposed. In the fall of 2003, with financial support and leadership from state and local government agencies in the northwest and the Great Lakes region, the Product Stewardship Institute (PSI) began a national effort to reduce the environmental impacts related to the manufacture and disposal of mercury switch thermostats. The goals of the project are to increase the collection and recycling of mercury switch thermostats and to increase the replacement rate of mercury thermostats with non-mercury alternatives. Those currently involved in this effort include the Thermostat Recycling Corporation (TRC); the four largest thermostat manufacturers (Honeywell, General Electric, White-Rodgers, and Invensys Climate Controls); heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) wholesalers and contractors; building demolition contractors; retailers; government officials; an energy utility; and an environmental group.

PSI developed a Background Summary Report/Action Plan in 2004 that highlighted the problems, key issues, and potential solutions to managing thermostats, and held two stakeholder meetings in July and October, 2004. These meetings resulted in agreement on eight priority strategies, three of which are in the implementation phase. In March 2005, PSI and TRC announced the launch of an expansion of the TRC collection program to HVAC contractor locations, along with a second effort to improve chain wholesaler participation in the TRC program. A pilot project to collect thermostats from wholesalers via household hazardous waste (HHW) programs is scheduled to start in the fall 2005. Additional priority projects will be implemented once funding is available. These include:

- Pilot project to test a financial incentive for HVAC contractors that collect and recycle mercury thermostats and replace them with energy star thermostats
- Mail-Back Pilot Project
- Third Dialogue Meeting to address mercury thermostat sales
- HVAC Contractor Outreach Strategy
- Retailer/Homeowner Education Strategy

Contacts for more information

- PSI web page, http://www.productstewardship.us/prod_mercury_project.html. Has a detailed listing of the project's activities, including the background summary report, and agenda and minutes of meetings in Portland, OR in July and Chicago, IL in October 2004.
- PSI Executive Director, Scott Cassel, (617)236-4855; scott@productstewardship.us.
- TRC web page, http://www.nema.org/index_nema.cfm/664.