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Author: Randy Case

Title: *Municipal Mercury Reduction Programs*

# Plugging into Businesses: the Light Brigade, A Bright Idea, and the Lamp Amnesty

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Title: Program/Project Manager II

Session: Reaching Small Businesses & Communities to Reduce Mercury Waste

## Background

Located on Puget Sound in Washington State, and covering more than 2,200 square miles, King County is nearly twice as large as the average county in the United States. With more than 1.7 million people, it also ranks as the 12th most populous county in the nation.

Prompted by citizen demand, Washington State directed local governments to create plans to ensure proper management of hazardous wastes produced by households and, in small quantity, by businesses and other organizations. In 1991 local governments and agencies within King County established a partnership to manage these wastes regionally. The resulting program is known as the Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County.

## Focus on Mercury-containing lamps

Of the 1,000 pounds of mercury released into the environment each year from human sources in King County, Seattle, Washington, fluorescent lamps account for 150 to 300 pounds. The Local Hazardous Waste Management Program has promoted commercial fluorescent lamp recycling since 1999, providing outreach to business sectors through site visits, cash incentives, workshops, mass media, publications and a Web site. In 1999-2000, the US E.P.A. and Washington Department of Ecology added mercury-containing lamps to the Universal Waste Rule, requiring that all businesses recycle spent lamps or manage them as hazardous waste. Since then, the commercial recycling rate in King County has reached an estimated 27 percent. Lamp dumping continues, with more than 70 percent of business lamps not going to recycling facilities.

## Light Brigade, a Bright Idea, and Lamp Amnesty

The Local Hazardous Waste Management Program developed two projects to address lamps in businesses and one for residents. For the commercial sector, the Light Brigade worked with larger generators, specifically grocery stores, to create and reward leaders in the marketplace. The second, Lamp Amnesty, was designed to motivate small businesses to recycle their lamps by connecting first time recyclers with local recycling companies.

A residentially focused program, called A Bright Idea, involved retailers in taking back lamps from residents. 68 stores in a four county area within the Puget Sound area participated and customers paid a small fee for the recycling service. In return, customers received a coupon for \$0.50 off the next fluorescent lamp they bought.

### Highlights

Topics to be discussed will include building in behavior change components and creating effective partnerships with the private sector.

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## ABSTRACT

TITLE OF PAPER: “Municipal Mercury Reduction Programs”

PRESENTER: Randy Case, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

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Title Session: Concurrent Session 6A – Reaching Businesses/Communities

Municipal wastewater treatment plants in the Great Lakes Basin are subject to stringent effluent limits for the pollutant mercury. In order to achieve these limits many municipalities will need to implement Mercury Pollutant Minimization Programs in order to reduce mercury discharges to sanitary sewer systems to the greatest extent practicable. Over the past six years the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has worked with twenty communities to pilot local mercury reduction activities. These activities targeted the traditional mercury-using sectors: hospitals, dental offices, schools, HVAC contractors, auto switches, and others. This paper summarizes the experiences of this pilot work and presents a “Mercury Pollutant Minimization Program - Guidance Manual for Municipalities” intended to aid development and implementation of community mercury reduction activities during the next decade.

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