

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

1 Million Switches Recovered

NATIONAL VEHICLE MERCURY SWITCH RECOVERY PROGRAM

Partnership Reaches Millionth Switch Milestone

The National Vehicle Mercury Switch Recovery Program (NVMSRP) has collected the millionth mercury-containing automotive switch. This milestone highlights how the NVMSRP partnership is making progress toward reducing the amount of toxic mercury released into the air, water and land. The goal of the NVMSRP is to capture 80 to 90 percent of available vehicle mercury switches by 2017, when the program is scheduled to end.

Vehicles are the most recycled consumer goods in America. Each year, the steel industry recycles more than 14 million tons of steel from retired vehicles, the equivalent of nearly 13.5 million new automobiles. As a result, the steel industry is the largest consumer of recycled materials in the world. Most vehicles that have reached the end of their useful life are dismantled,

stripped, flattened, shredded and melted to make new steel. If mercury switches are not removed from retired vehicles by dismantlers, a significant amount of that mercury can be released into the environment through air emissions.

EPA estimates that about 8 tons per year of mercury is emitted from electric arc furnaces that melt scrap metal from retired cars, making them the fourth largest source of mercury air emissions. The total amount of mercury currently emitted annually in the U.S. is estimated to be 120 tons per year. Air emissions are considered the primary source of mercury that ultimately concentrates in fish as methylmercury and poses risks to human health and the environment through fish consumption.

Some vehicles manufactured prior to 2003 contain mercury switches. Recovering these switches is an easy, cost effective and energy efficient way to reduce mercury air emissions. Dismantlers can find and remove most switches within a few minutes. It costs far less per pound of mercury than emission controls and it supports many industries that produce and use scrap metal. Finally, it conserves energy and natural resources by promoting automotive steel recycling while reducing mercury contamination.

BACKGROUND

NVMSRP provides dismantlers, who remove the switches, with education, supplies, no-cost shipping and recycling, and incentives for automobile dismantlers and scrap recyclers to remove mercury-containing switches from scrap vehicles before they are shredded and used to make new steel. It's very easy for automobile dismantlers and scrap recyclers to join the NVMSRP. All they have to do is **contact the** End of Life Vehicle Solutions Corporation (ELVS), a company formed by the automotive industry, and ask to join the NVMSRP. There is no cost to participate in the program. ELVS can be reached on the worldwide web at www.elvsolutions.org/contact.html or by calling, toll free, (877) 225-ELVS.

The following organizations and industry sectors are working together in this effort to encourage the recovery of mercury switches:





End of Life Vehicle Solutions Corporation (ELVS), a non-profit established by thirteen automakers, provide dismantlers with information and supplies needed to remove, collect and transport switches to proper recycling and disposal facilities, and track program progress.

Dismantlers remove mercury-containing switches and ship them to ELVS, giving them the ability to sell reduced-mercury scrap and earn recognition and certain financial incentives.

Scrap recyclers build awareness of the mercury switch removal program in their own industry and in the dismantling industry, which is their chief supplier of scrap vehicles.

Steel makers educate and encourage their supply chain to participate, as well as purchase scrap metal generated from participating dismantlers and recyclers that have removed the mercury-containing switches.

Environmental groups and the Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) publicly endorse the program; support outreach education to increase participation in the states; and, participate in the development and improvement of data collection efforts.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) helps implement the program and, in December 2007, included the NVMSRP as a compliance option for regulating mercury emissions from steelmaking in electric arc furnaces and iron and steel foundries under the Clean Air Act.

EPA'S ADDITIONAL MERCURY REDUCTION EFFORTS

NVMSRP is one of several actions EPA is taking to reduce emissions from mercury-containing switches. Other actions include:

EPA issues rules to reduce mercury releases from steel manufacturing facilities and for iron and steel foundries area sources—In December 2007 EPA issued new air emissions standards that will reduce mercury releases from steel manufacturers using electric arc furnaces and from certain iron and steel foundries. Under these rules, steel manufacturers using automotive scrap must demonstrate that they accept automobile scrap only from dismantlers and scrap

recyclers that remove all available mercury switches. This is quicker and more cost effective way to control mercury emissions than adding mercury removal technologies to furnaces.

Significant New Use Rule for Elemental Mercury

— In October 2007, EPA issued a final Significant New Use Rule (SNUR) that requires notification to EPA 90 days prior to U.S. manufacture, import, or processing of elemental mercury for use in convenience light switches, anti-lock brake system switches, and active ride control system switches in certain motor vehicles. The rule gives EPA the opportunity to evaluate the risks of using elemental mercury and to prohibit or limit its use.

PROGRAM PARTNERS

American Iron and Steel Institute
www.steel.org

Automotive Recyclers Association
www.a-r-a.org

Ecology Center
www.ecocenter.org

End of Life Vehicles Solutions Corporation
www.elvsolutions.org

Environmental Council of the States
www.ecos.org

Environmental Defense
www.environmentaldefense.org

Environmental Protection Agency
www.epa.gov/mercury

Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries
www.isri.org

Steel Manufacturers Association
www.steelnet.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on the NVMSRP and for regularly updated mercury switch collection data, please visit www.epa.gov/mercury or www.elvsolutions.org.