

**MEMO**

**FROM:** Chuck Gipp, Director, Dept. of Natural Resources

**Cc:** Bruce Trautman, Deputy Director, Dept. of Natural Resources  
Bill Ehm, Administrator, Environmental Services Division  
Sharon Tahtinen, Legislative Liaison, Dept. of Natural Resources  
Alex Moon, Chief, Land Quality Bureau

**DATE:** January 15, 2018

**RE:** Report on Mercury Thermostat Recycling

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I am pleased to provide this status report on the implementation of the Mercury Thermostat Recycling Program as required by Iowa Code 455D.16.

The purpose of Iowa code 455D.16 is to stop the sale and installation of mercury-added thermostats and require manufacturers of mercury-added thermostats to collect and recycle as many mercury-added thermostats as reasonably practicable. To ensure success of the program, the legislation directed the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to submit an annual report to the General Assembly regarding the collection and recycling of mercury-added thermostats in the state.

**Status of the Mercury Thermostat Recycling Program<sup>1</sup>**

The Thermostat Recycling Corporation (TRC) is acting on behalf of 29 manufacturers representing 104 brands. TRC has 99 collection locations in Iowa. The program collected 2,098 mercury thermostats and 212 loose switches containing 18.5 pounds of mercury in 2016. Approximately 84% of the thermostats were recovered from HVAC wholesale distributors, 10% from HVAC contractors, and 6% from Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) facilities. TRC has collected 190.05 pounds of mercury since the beginning of the legislated program and 330.6 pounds of mercury since thermostat collection began in Iowa in 1998.

**Actual Collection Rates**

The collection rate is the number of thermostats collected, divided by the number available for collection, expressed as a percentage. Although the number of thermostats collected is available from the TRC report, the number of mercury containing thermostats available for recycling is not as easily obtainable. To determine this, one needs to know the number of thermostats removed each year and what percentage of those contain mercury. The DNR has been unable to reach an agreement with industry representatives on what the collection goals should be.

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<sup>1</sup> This data is based on reports submitted by thermostat manufacturers for the calendar year 2016. Reports for 2017 are due to the DNR April 1, 2018.

### Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Thermostat Recycling Program

Although 2009 was the first year of the legislated program, TRC has been collecting mercury thermostats in Iowa since 1998. Figure 1 shows the number of thermostats collected by TRC each year. The number of thermostats collected in 2016 decreased 21% from the previous year.

**Figure 1:**  
**Number of mercury-added thermostats collected in Iowa by year.**

