



CASE STUDY:

City of Gastonia - Mercury Collection/ Thermometer Exchange Event

Location:	Gastonia (Gaston County)
Industry:	Municipality (SIC 9500)
Pollution Prevention Application:	Mercury Collection
Waste Reduction:	894 mercury-containing items removed from environment; four containers of free liquid mercury
Contact:	Janet Maddox, (704) 854-6672 or janetm@cityofgastonia.com

BACKGROUND

The City of Gastonia held its first Mercury Collection Day and Thermometer Exchange on July 13, 2002. The event was planned with guidance from the Health Care Without Harm organization (<http://www.noharm.org>) and the N.C. Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance (DPPEA), which also partially funded the project. Additional funding was obtained from local donors to pay for the thermometers. Total time required to plan and hold the event was six months.

PROJECT DETAILS

Mercury-free thermometers were obtained from RG Medical Diagnostics (<http://www.rgmd.com>), who supplied non-mercury thermometers at cost for the city in exchange for having its name publicized along with the event. Gastonia was able to purchase 350 mercury-free thermometers for \$973. The city then contracted with the waste hauler ECOFLO for proper disposal of the mercury-containing items at a cost of \$1,102. A tent was rented for the event to provide shade for the collection workers.

Shortly before the event, the local newspaper ran a series of four articles on the health and environmental effects of mercury, common mercury-containing household items, and information on the collection event. Fliers were also posted around Gastonia advertising the mercury collection event, and announcements were placed on the local government access cable channel and on local radio stations, all of which helped to heighten awareness and generate interest in the event. A brochure and flier about mercury and about mercury in schools were available to citizens at the collection event. For more

information on the newspaper articles and brochure, see DPPEA's Web page on government mercury reduction projects at <http://www.p2pays.org/mercury/govproj.htm>. For more information on the flier, see the Northeast Waste Management Officials' Association (NEWMOA) Web page "How to Hold a Mercury Collection Event" at <http://www.newmoa.org/Newmoa/hdocs/prevention/mercury/schools/publicize.cfm>.

WASTE REDUCTION AND ANNUAL SAVINGS

The mercury collection day removed 894 mercury-containing items from the environment for recycling, plus four containers of liquid mercury. The following mercury-containing items were collected:

- 643 button cell batteries
- 167 fluorescent light bulbs
- 69 thermometers collected
- 15 thermostats

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The mercury collection day was such a success, the City of Gastonia has decided to make it an open event. Gastonia residents who wish to properly dispose of mercury-containing items such as thermometers, button cell batteries, batteries or thermostats can contact Janet Maddox to make the exchange for a mercury-free thermometer (while supplies last). Also, plans are in the works for Gastonia to hold another event in the near future targeted at schools.



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OCTOBER 2002

DPPEA FY02-15