



Massachusetts
Department
of
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION

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These case studies represent the culmination of a cooperative effort of the Environmental Protection Agency New England (EPA NE), Northeast Waste Management Officials' Association (NEWMOA), Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MA DEP), and four New England Federal Facilities. The project's purpose was to develop a methodology to assist Federal Facilities to identify and reduce uses of mercury. Mercury poses a serious threat to human health and the environment, and is the focus of numerous public health, business assistance, policy, and legislative efforts throughout the New England states.

The Project Team selected four distinct types of operations at which to test our methodology: an environmental laboratory, an Air Force facility, a Naval facility, and a university setting. These facilities ranged from a single building to large campuses, which like small towns, included residences, commercial buildings, office space, medical and dental facilities, elementary schools, HVAC, metal and wood workshops, power plants, and scientific laboratories.

The Project Team developed a questionnaire and inventory log sheet (included at the end of this document) to help facilities identify the locations and uses of mercury-containing products as well as related procurement, management, and disposal procedures. The questionnaire and inventory were sent to the each facility prior to a site visit by the Project Team. During the site visit the Project Team viewed firsthand what types of mercury materials are found onsite, identified purchasing and management practices, and provided some information about alternatives to mercury products. The case studies were developed to present the results of the four mercury assessments, the various recommendations made by the Project Team, and the actions taken by the facilities to address the recommendations. The following outlines some of the lessons learned from this project.

Lessons Learned

- The process of using the questionnaire and inventory log sheet, and performing an interview and site visit led to an identification and reduction of mercury at all of the facilities. There were opportunities for reduction at all facilities; even at facilities that had previously identified mercury issues as a problem and had taken steps to reduce mercury.
- Federal facilities take mercury in products and their proper disposal seriously. All the facilities we visited had procedures in place to assure that mercury-containing products were handled appropriately and had controls for the purchase of hazardous materials, including those containing

mercury. A centralized purchasing system, often called a pharmacy, was more likely to identify mercury products and non-mercury alternatives than a decentralized system.

- We did find a few serious situations; mercury spills not being cleaned up properly, staff uninformed about the danger of mercury exposure, mercury not being carefully stored, and used fluorescent bulbs disposed in the regular trash.

Take a look through these cases studies. At least one of these facilities will probably have similar building functions to ones that you have at your federal facility. Your facility can take action on its own. You do not require a team from the outside to track and reduce mercury at your facility. You can use the questionnaire and inventory log sheet to identify possible sources of mercury and use the ideas in the case studies as a starting point for thinking about addressing any problems that you find. If you have questions, please feel free to call any of the Project Team members listed below.

Sincerely,

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