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Comprehensive Thermostat Recycling Laws Pass in California and Pennsylvania National Trend of Shared Responsibility for Safe Handling of Mercury Products Continues

BOSTON, October 20, 2008 – California and Pennsylvania recently joined four other states in passing comprehensive laws enforcing the proper collection and recycling of mercury-containing thermostats. These new state laws are based on model state legislation developed by the Product Stewardship Institute (PSI) with input from thermostat manufacturers, heating and cooling contractors and wholesalers, retailers, environmental groups, and government officials. PSI's model shares responsibility for safe thermostat recycling among all these groups and provides a menu of options from which states can choose.

“While thermostat manufacturers have the most responsibility to reduce the toxicity of their products and remove them from the waste stream, other stakeholders, including consumers, have key roles in thermostat collection and recycling,” said Scott Cassel, PSI's Executive Director. “Mercury is one of the biggest health hazards found in everyday household products, and the proper recycling of these products is essential to protecting the environment.”

Many thermostats currently in use contain mercury, a naturally occurring toxin that can affect the nervous system. Although no mercury is released when these products are intact, when disposed of in an improper fashion, they can cause mercury to be released into the environment. While sales of mercury-containing thermostats are on the decline as manufacturers have shifted production to non-mercury digital thermostats, there are still an estimated 50 million mercury-containing thermostats in homes throughout the United States.

The nation's first comprehensive thermostat law was enacted in 2006 in Maine, and was mediated by PSI among government, industry, and environmental stakeholders. This pioneering law was followed by PSI's development of a more inclusive model that was used by innovative state and local leaders to pass subsequent laws in Iowa, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

“PSI congratulates the state legislatures of California and Pennsylvania, as well as the efforts of the California Product Stewardship Council, Sierra Club, and the Thermostat Recycling Corporation (TRC) for their diligence in negotiating shared responsibility thermostat laws,” said Jennifer Holliday, PSI Board Member and key negotiator of Vermont's thermostat law, representing Chittenden County's waste program. “Through PSI's efforts nationally, as well as state and local efforts and the work of TRC, thermostat collection locations

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have increased and overall participation is on the rise. All six states with comprehensive thermostat legislation are members of PSI and clearly support the concept of producer responsibility.”

Fortunately, most manufacturers no longer produce mercury-containing thermostats, so the problem lies predominantly in the collection of mercury thermostats removed from homes and offices. PSI is helping states develop a common methodology to set baselines for thermostat recovery and to measure progress. Maine and Vermont include performance goals for thermostat recycling in their laws, as well as financial incentives for contractors and homeowners to encourage recycling. California and Iowa’s thermostat laws require their state environmental agencies to develop the performance goals. All six states tout the energy-saving benefits of digital thermostats. PSI is advising additional states on how to adapt the PSI model program for their own unique circumstances, with an eventual goal of federal legislation.

For a comparison of state mercury thermostat laws, please read PSI’s [State Thermostat Legislation Comparison](#)

For general information about mercury thermostats, go to:
<http://www.productstewardship.us/thermostats>

For information about the Product Stewardship Institute, go to: <http://www.productstewardship.us/>

The Product Stewardship Institute (PSI) is a national environmental institute with membership from 45 states, 60 local governments, and more than 30 businesses, environmental groups, and organizations that establishes cooperative agreements to reduce the health and environmental impacts from consumer products.

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