

WHAT ARE AUTOMOTIVE MERCURY SWITCHES?

Many vehicles manufactured between 1977 and 2003 contain mercury switches. The switches were commonly used to turn on lights in glove boxes, trunks and hoods. Mercury switches also were used in anti-lock brake and air bag sensors. The switches were used in many models of vehicles.

More information on which vehicles contain mercury switches and where they are located on the vehicle is available at www.elvsolutions.org.

WHY ARE THEY A CONCERN?

Mercury switches are a concern for a number of reasons.

First, there are a lot of them. In fact, EPA estimates that 67 million mercury switches are available for recovery from vehicles. Second, each switch contains about 1 gram of mercury. With more than 13 million vehicles being recycled each year, a significant amount of mercury could be released into the environment if the switches are not removed. Third, mercury is known to pose a risk to people and the environment.

SOUTH CAROLINA'S MERCURY SWITCH REMOVAL PROGRAM

Vehicles are the most recycled consumer goods in the United States according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In fact, the steel industry recycles more than 14 million tons of steel from old vehicles annually. While recycling old vehicles saves energy and natural resources, it also can lead to mercury releases into the environment if mercury switches are not removed.

When vehicles are retired, automobile dismantlers (also known as scrap or salvage yards) typically remove valuable parts for reuse and recycling. The stripped vehicles are then flattened and shredded. Steelmakers purchase and melt the shredded material to produce new steel products.

WHAT IS THE S.C. MERCURY SWITCH REMOVAL PROGRAM?

In May 2006, South Carolina passed legislation (Section 44-96-185 of the S.C. Solid Waste Policy and Management Act of 1991) setting up a mercury switch removal program. The program is intended to remove and recycle mercury switches from vehicles before they are crushed and shredded.

According to the legislation, "no person shall knowingly place an end-of-life vehicle into the production stream for a steel recycling facility in South Carolina containing a mercury switch." As such, automobile dismantlers and scrap metal recycling facilities should participate in the S.C. Mercury Switch Removal Program. Through the program, the state is encouraging recycling and helping to reduce mercury releases into the environment.

The state's program is offered in partnership with End-of-Life Vehicle Solutions (ELVS), a non-profit corporation formed by automobile manufacturers to manage and recycle the collected switches as well as provide educational materials to you at NO COST.

HOW DOES THE S.C. MERCURY SWITCH REMOVAL PROGRAM WORK?

The program is simple. Automobile dismantlers or scrap metal recycling facilities remove the mercury switches and collect them for recycling. ELVS provides collection buckets and education materials at no cost. Environmental Quality (EQ), the mercury recycling contractor for the program, manages and documents the switches collected by each participant.

As part of the state's program, participants in the program are entitled to a \$2.50 TAX CREDIT for each switch collected and submitted in accordance with

the ELVS program. These credits may be used to reduce corporate income tax liability or corporate license fees imposed pursuant to the S.C. Code of Law (Section 12-6-530 and Section 12-20-50, respectively).

HOW CAN YOU PARTICIPATE?

Participating in the program is very easy. Automobile dismantlers or scrap metal recycling facilities may participate in the S.C. Mercury Switch Removal Program by registering with ELVS. To register, call **1-877-225-3587** or e-mail info@elvsolutions.org. If you e-mail ELVS, please provide your name, company name, address and phone number.

Once you are registered, just follow these steps.

- Remove mercury switch assemblies from the vehicles at your facility and put them in the collection buckets that you receive from ELVS.
- When your bucket is full, put the lid on, complete the label and mail it to EQ. EQ pays for shipping and will send you a new bucket to continue collecting mercury switch assemblies.
- EQ will count and record the number of switches in each bucket and make that information available to you via its Web site. You may use this information to verify your tax credit.

WHAT ABOUT THE TAX CREDIT?

As mentioned above, participants in the S.C. Mercury Switch Removal Program are entitled to a \$2.50 tax credit for each switch collected. To claim your credit, simply complete SC SCH.TC-33 when filing your annual tax return. For more information, visit www.sctax.org.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ...

For more information on the S.C. Mercury Switch Removal Program, contact the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling at **1-800-768-7348**.

For more information on ELVS, receiving collection buckets or educational materials, contact ELVS at **1-877-225-3587** or info@elvsolutions.org. You also can visit www.elvsolutions.org.

IT'S WORKING ...

The S.C. Mercury Switch Removal Program is working. The proof is in the numbers.

As part of the program:

- 118 automobile dismantlers and scrap metal recycling facilities are participating;
- 10,662 mercury switches have been recovered; and
- 23.46 pounds of mercury have been recycled.



BEYOND MERCURY SWITCHES ...

In addition to mercury switches, vehicles contain several other items that must be removed and handled properly prior to being flattened and shredded for recycling. Fluids such as used motor oil, gasoline, antifreeze, transmission fluid and brake fluid must be drained from vehicles and handled properly. While recycling is preferred, some items may need to be handled as waste. The sale of used motor oil may even generate some revenue. Waste tires – including the spare – also must be removed from vehicles before entering the scrap metal recycling process. Tire recyclers – as well as some counties – can assist in the proper management of waste tires.

To identify your county recycling coordinator, visit www.scdhec.gov/recycle and click on "Recycling Where You Live." For information on recycling companies to assist in the proper management of vehicle-related items, you can visit www.scdhec.gov/smartbusiness and click on "What can I do with collected recyclables?"



DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling Technical Assistance Sheets provide general information on environmental topics. The Office, however, is non-regulatory, and compliance questions should be addressed to DHEC's Division of Compliance and Enforcement at **(803) 896-4136** or www.scdhec.gov/environment/lwm/HTML/sw_compliance_enforcement.htm. Readers are encouraged to reproduce this material. For more information about solid waste issues, please call **1-800-768-7348** or visit www.scdhec.gov/recycle. Please send written correspondence to DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling, 2600 Bull Street, Columbia, SC 29201.